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THE ROSE OF RABY

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RUM 'UNS TO FOLLOW
THE MELTON MOWBRAY OF JOHN FERNELEY
WIT AND WISDOM OF THE SHIRES
THE FLYING PARSON AND DICK CHRISTIAN
BAD 'UNS TO BEAT
CHRONICLE OF THE LAST CRUSADE
THE ROSE OF LONDON

THE ROSE OF RABY

by
GUY PAGET

A Life of
Cecily Neville, Duchess of York



COLLINS
FORTY-EIGHT PALL MALL LONDON
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To
HER MAJESTY
THE QUEEN

MADAM:

May it please your Majesty to allow me to express my most sincere and grateful thanks for the very great honour of your permission to dedicate this humble work to your Majesty.

There is, as far as I know, no book dealing historically with the life of the illustrious and unfortunate lady who once bore the honoured title of Duchess of York, which henceforth will ever be remembered with love and affection, since it was by that name the people of the Empire first knew your Majesty.

I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your Majesty's most faithful and devoted servant,

GUY PAGET, D.L.

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PREFACE

SOME of the critics of my last book, *The Rose of London*, stated that they did not know which part was fact and which fiction. This is not surprising, for delvers into the past are so often baffled by the same problem, even when dealing with contemporary documents.

What, for instance, will some future student of the conditions of the English aristocracy at the beginning of the twentieth century make of a certain speech delivered at Limehouse by a future Prime Minister, and of another a little later at Blenheim Palace, in the year 1909, by his future Chancellor of the Exchequer?

A scientist, when he discovers the remains of some extinct animal, assembles what is left of the bones and, aided by a life-long study of his subject, puts them together filling the gaps with plaster. He imagines the flesh, the skin and possibly the colour, and gives the public a very fair idea of what the animal looked like 10,000 years or so ago. That is what I have tried to do with Cecily Nevile. Unfortunately, there are many gaps in my skeleton.

Ralph, Earl of Westmoreland, who died in 1425, refers in his will to his daughter Cecily as Duchess of York. We hear no more of her till the consummation of her marriage to the Duke in 1438, when their respective ages were twenty-six and twenty-seven. A delay of some thirteen years at least was so contrary to medieval custom that I have drawn on my imagination for the reason. Hence the quarrel over Joan of Arc, coupled with a youthful love affair, which has enabled me to

bring into the picture the Maid of Orleans and the state of Northern France. It is a fact that Cardinal Beaufort, the King and the Duke of York were in Rouen at the time. The details of the trial I have taken from contemporary French sources.

Except for these suggestions, I do not think I have been guilty of invention in any other part of my book, although the years dealt with are the most barren of record of any from the dark ages. It may almost be said that more is known of King Alfred than of Edward IV. From 1463 to 1471 we are reduced at times to a single contemporary chronicler. Most of the state papers for some of these years have been destroyed.

Before starting on this book, I made an analytical summary of all the contemporary records, Continental as well as English, and compared the works of Strickland, Hookham, Sir James Ramsay, Sir Charles Oman, Professor Mowat and other modern historians. I can assure the reader that I have not intentionally garbled or mis-stated a single HISTORICAL FACT.

Much ink has been expended over Margaret of Anjou, the tiger-cat of France, but the story of Cecily Neville has never been told. We only get glimpses of her behind a curtain of mist, but the glimpses are consistent. They reveal a strong brave woman, the mother of lusty children, whom she tried to control for their own good. We may be sure she amply deserved her nicknames of "Proud Cec" and "The Rose of Raby." It has been my endeavour to follow her into the mist and give the reader a living picture of this tragic character.

I have not given my authorities because, this work being in no sense a text book, I wished to avoid breaking the story with references which, as I know to my cost, are utterly worthless without a whole library at one's

elbow. If I had wanted support for any outrageous lie, I could always refer to the Abbé Prévost's *Vie de Marguerite d'Anjou, Reine d'Angleterre, Paris, 1629*, which has hardly one line of historical fact in its two volumes, or to a novel called *Cecily Neville, the Rose of Raby*, which makes Cecily out to have first married an Earl of Warwick, who never existed, and to have had a baby by him at the age of two!

How many readers would be any the wiser if I gave the bottom of my pages the effect of a sum in algebra, ¹Wor 120, ²Fab 100, ³Ram i.74, ⁴Abb Pré ii, 49, ⁵Cro Cron 76?

A table of Lord Westmoreland's descendants will will help the reader to follow the story more easily.

Children of 1st Earl of Westmoreland—

Ralph Nevile, *b.* 1363, *d.* 1425. Son of Ralph, 3rd Baron Nevile of Raby, by Maud, dr. of Lord Percy (Hotspur) and his 1st wife, Lady Margaret Stafford, dr. of Hugh, 2nd Earl of Stafford.

JOHN *d.* 1423. *m.* Elizabeth Holland, dr. of Thomas, Earl of Kent.

RALPH *m.* Elizabeth, dr. of Sir Robert Ferrers of Oversby.

MAUD *m.* Peter, Lord Maunly. *d.* 1415.

PHILLIPA *m.* Thomas, Lord Dacre. *d.* 1455.

MARGARET *m.* Richard, Lord Scroop of Bolton. *d.* 1420.

ALICE *m.* Sir Thomas Grey, 2ndly. Sir Gilbert Lancaster.

MARGERIE Abbess of Barking.

ELIZABETH a nun.

Children of

Ralph by his second wife, Joan Beaufort, dr. of John of Gaunt and Catherine Swinford.

RICHARD *b.* 1399. *k.* 1460. *m.* Alice Montacute and became Earl of Salisbury in right of his wife.

WILLIAM Lord Falconbridge and Earl of Kent. *d.* 1462.

GEORGE Lord Latimer. *d.* 1469.

EDWARD Lord Abergavenny.

ROBERT Bishop of Durham.

CATHERINE *m.* John Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk.

*ELIZABETH *m.* Richard, Lord Despenser. *d.* 1414.

*ELEANOR *m.* Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland. *k.* 1455.

CUTHBERT Died young. *

HENRY *k.* 1460.

THOMAS *k.* 1461.

ANN *m.* Humphrey, Duke of Buckingham. *k.* 1459.
Secondly Walter Blount, Lord Mountjoy.

JANE a nun.

CECILY *b.* 1414 *m.* Richard Plantagenet, Earl of Cambridge and Duke of York. *k.* 1460.

Nevile grandchildren of 1st Lord Westmoreland. Sons of Ralph, Lord Nevile.

RALPH who succeeded as 2nd Earl.

THOMAS *d.* 1423.

JOHN often called Lord Nevile.

Children of

Richard Nevile, Earl of Salisbury and Alice, dr. of Thomas Montacute, last Earl of Salisbury. *d.* 1442.

* Some think these two ladies are the same person.

- RICHARD The King Maker Earl of Warwick. *k.* 1471.
m. Ann Beauchamp, Countess of Warwick.
- THOMAS killed at Towton, 1461.
- JOHN Earl and Marquis of Montacute and Earl
of Northumberland. *k.* 1471 at Barnet.
- GEORGE Archbishop of York. *d.* 1482.
- JOAN *m.* William FitzAllan, Earl of Arundel.
d. 1487.
- CECILY *m.* Henry Beauchamp, Duke of Warwick,
brother of Richard Nevile's wife. 2ndly
John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester. *k.* 1470.
- ALICE MARY *m.* Lord FitzHugh.
- ELEANOR 1st wife of Thomas Stanley, 1st Earl of
Derby.
- KATHERINE *m.* 1st, William, Lord Bonvill. *ex.* 1461;
2nd William, Lord Hastings. *d.* 1485.
- MARGARET *m.* John de Vere, Earl of Oxford. *d.* 1472.

Joan, Lady Westmoreland's Family.

Her brother John, Earl of Somerset, who died in 1410, and
was father of

- HENRY 2nd Earl. Died young.
- JOHN 3rd Earl, 1st Duke. *d.* 1444.
- EDMUND Marquis of Dorset. 4th Earl. 2nd Duke.
k. 1455.

Her other brothers were

- HENRY Cardinal, Bishop of Winchester, Lord
Chancellor. *d.* 1447.
- THOMAS Earl of Dorset, Duke of Exeter. *m.* Margaret
Nevile of Horneby (a cousin). *d.* 1426.

Commanded the rear at Agincourt.

The first Lady Westmoreland was daughter of Hugh,
Earl of Stafford, and Phillipa Beauchamp, dr. of Thomas,
Earl of Warwick.

Her other brothers

EDMUND whose son was 1st Duke of Buckingham.
 m. Ann Nevile.

HUGH *m.* Elizabeth, Baroness Bouchier.

Her sisters

KATHERINE *m.* Michael de la Pole.

JOAN *m.* Thomas Holland, Earl of Kent.

ELIZABETH *m.* Lord Ferrers of Chartley.

The Duke of York's sister married Henry, Viscount Bouchier.

This table gives some idea of the powerful connections of the Westmorelands.

I have used italics when quoting from more or less contemporary documents such as the Ludlow Proclamations, only modernising the spelling.

I wish to thank my wife for all her help and sympathy, the Hon. Robert Trefusis for correcting my manuscript and reading the proofs, and Miss S. F. Benda for her skill and intelligence in deciphering and typing my vile handwriting. I am also deeply indebted to Sir Charles Oman and the late Sir James Ramsay's works which I have found invaluable as a guide.

GUY PAGET.

NOTES BY SIR CHARLES OMAN, K.B.E.

CHICHELE PROFESSOR OF MODERN HISTORY, OXFORD.

HAVING, for my time, experienced all the difficulties arising from the insufficient authorities of which Major Guy Paget speaks in his preface, I appreciate thoroughly the skill and courage with which he has tackled a piece of English history which is at once very interesting and very obscure. The student of the period has to reconstruct for himself the character of many of the leading people of the epoch, because no competent contemporary cared, or perhaps dared, to give a full and fair sketch of them. This is particularly the case with Richard of York, the hero of Major Paget's story; he has to be reconstructed from his acts, which are sometimes puzzling and at others contradictory. On the whole, I agree with this study of him, picturing him as a man much tried, much wronged, and on the whole moderate and well-intentioned. The somewhat arbitrary doings of the last few months of his life must be considered in the light of the long-continued slights and intrigues of which he had been a victim. Margaret of Anjou was most certainly unscrupulous and cruel, even when we allow for her difficult position, and for her early years spent in a French court. The imbecility of Henry VI. is really treated with great kindness by Major Paget—his eccentricities and absurd and pedantic prudery can best be realised by reading his laudatory life by his Chaplain Blackman, many anecdotes in which produce the reverse of the effect intended by the simple cleric. A saint, alas! may also be a prig as well as a simpleton.

Where narrative, not drawn from chronicles or documents, is interfixed in this story, I think that the reader will recognise logical reconstruction, and not mere hypothesis. These "dialogues of the dead" have their value, when they are founded on careful studies of the characters of the actors, deduced from their recorded sayings and acts. Certainly the dry-as-dust chronicles of the mid-fifteenth century need some garnish to make them readable—or even comprehensible.

CHARLES OMAN.

PART I

R.R.

B

CHAPTER I

RICHARD RIDES TO RABY

RABY CASTLE and its domain had been carved out of the Palatine of Durham by the strong hands of its Nevile Lords. Ralph, 1st Earl of Westmoreland, the most powerful noble in England, was its owner during the first half of the fifteenth century.

On a summer evening in the year 1415, a small party of horsemen approached the noble castle of Raby which dominates the rich farm lands above Langley Beck.

Seated in front of the leader of the party was a very small boy, who was crying softly to himself. He was very tired and uncomfortable, for every movement of the horse hurt him. He had a cold and no one had wiped his nose for days. He was hot, dirty, and his tummy ached. He did not understand what had happened. The bottom had dropped out of the universe. He had been very happy. There were plenty of women to see to his every want, and a big man used to come and play with him; then the man went away, and soon afterwards every one was crying and running about. He had been neglected, and when he cried, no one had taken any notice.

Then a stranger-man had come and his stepmother had cried. So had he, but when the man had put him on a horse, he had laughed. He had liked the first day. He had eaten all the things he had been forbidden to at home. They weren't very nice, but it was so naughty and grown-up, that made up for it. He had drunk mulled sack like a man, but when he had woken up he found himself alone

in the dark and no one had undressed him. He was very frightened at the strange noises round him. He had then been very sick and no one had paid any attention, so he had cried and was sick again. He had wanted his nurse and his mummy, but these men had only laughed at him. This had gone on for a week. At first it was fun not to be dressed and washed; and until he became chafed, he had liked riding and watching the people, but now he was very uncomfy all over inside and out, so he cried and his tummy ached.

This little boy was Richard Plantagenet, son of the Earl of Cambridge who had just lost his head for plotting against Henry V. as he was setting out to conquer France. The child was too near the throne to be left at large for any rebel to use as a pawn against the King in his absence. Henry had, therefore, sent him to Raby to be under the care of Ralph Nevile, Earl of Westmoreland, and his wife. Lady Westmoreland, who met the party as it entered the castle, was Joan Beaufort, the legitimised daughter of John of Gaunt, and so great-aunt of the half-blood to the King.

"What brings you here, Master Waterton," she asked, "away from the army? And what have you there? I did not know you were even married."

"Nor am I, your Grace," replied Robert Waterton, one of the King's ushers into whose care the child had been committed; "this is the brat of that traitor Cambridge, whom the King has sent to you for safe keeping and a better bringing-up than his father's. Plague take him, I say! But for him I should be now with his Highness conquering all France." And none too gently he swung the helpless child from his saddle bow, suspending him by the scruff of the neck, 'twixt heaven and earth. The child's eyes dilated with fear,

but he did not scream. He did not know why, but he just could not.

Lady Westmoreland sprang forward.

"You great clumsy mutton-fisted oaf," she cried. "Give me the child. The poor wee bairn, no one shall hurt him. You ought to be whipped, you great numskull. The poor wee bairn. Holy Mother of God, what a state it's in!"

The child, now feeling safe, nestled up to her and began to cry piteously.

"How long have you been on the road?" she asked.

"About ten days."

"And I don't suppose you ever washed or tended the child in all that time, did you? What did you give it to eat, you clumsy dolt?"

"I'm no child's nurse," said Waterton sourly. He did not appreciate these remarks before his men, who did, and grinned. "He was fed well enough, he had as much as he wanted of the same as we had, and slept well after a cup of hot sack."

"My tummy aches and I'm going to be sick," said Richard, and was, all down Lady Westmoreland's beautiful dress, which prevented that lady expressing her views on the diet provided for a three-year-old prince.

"He's a spewing infant, you'll find," said Waterton, with a grin at her discomfiture. Signalling to his men, he rode on into the vast stableyard of the castle.

Lady Westmoreland bore off the infant to a large nursery full of children of all ages. She had eight sons and six daughters ranging from Richard, aged fifteen, to Cecily, aged eighteen months.

"I like you," said Richard slowly; "and I liked mulled sack. It stops my tummy-ache, and I go to sleep. That man gave me a lot of sack. Will you?"

"You shall have something far better than that, my little one," said the countess, kissing his very dirty little face.

"You must not kiss me, I'm a prince," said the child. "*I don't mind, but my mummy says it's not proper for princes to be kissed. Why can't princes be kissed? My tummy aches and I want some sack.*"

"All right, my poor child, but I can kiss you, as I'm a princess."

"Oh! My tummy aches and I want some sack."

By this time they had reached the nursery and the infant was handed over to Lady Grey, the head nurse. What these two had to say about men and babies when they had undressed, washed, dosed and fed and left asleep the high and puissant prince, Richard, Earl of Cambridge, would not bear repeating.

When Richard woke up, he was still far from well. The effects of a week's diet of sack (sherry), tough, ill-cooked beef or mutton, and black bread, cannot be thrown off by a three-year-old stomach in a night. He was in a very bad temper, stiff, sore and liverish; and when an under-nurse told him to get up and wash, he just said:

"Won't."

"But you must, Lord Richard," said the woman.

"Shan't," replied the child defiantly.

"We'll soon see about that," replied she, taking him roughly by the arm and pulling him out.

With a scream of rage, he fixed his baby teeth in the back of her hand. Hearing this commotion in her usually well-ordered nursery, Lady Grey hurried up.

"Take that foul wench away and whip her from here to Newmarket," Richard screamed, remembering the threats he had heard at Cambridge Castle.

"If there is any whipping, it is you who will get it," replied Lady Grey sharply.

"By our Lady, I'll hang you to the nearest tree, you wery voul vitch, God blast my soul."

The child had been shockingly spoilt by his step-mother, Maud Clifford—his own mother had died when he was aged only one year. He had also picked up a large vocabulary for one so young from the retainers in the yards of the castles where he had been brought up.

Lady Grey was as good as her word and proceeded to place the prince, now black in the face with rage, across her knee and apply her right hand vigorously to that portion, already sore from his long ride, which Nature has designed for the purpose. Richard Nevile heard the noise as he was passing, and looked in to see the cause.

His entry coincided with the release of the culprit.

"Now be a good little boy in future and do as Martha tells you," said Lady Grey, and turned away. But instead of going and crying softly in some corner, till he should be received back into grace, the child flew at his tormentor with teeth, feet and fist, and succeeded in inflicting a very nasty bite on Lady Grey's leg, and bringing her down with a heavy crash on the floor. Young Nevile, who had felt the weight of the lady's hand in his younger days, roared with laughter and drew down on himself the wrath of the outraged nurse. Some instinct seemed to tell the child that here was a friend, so scrambling to his feet, he ran to the young man and clung to his leg.

"Well done, little 'un," said he, "well done," and patted the dark head.

"Richard, I'm ashamed of you. How dare you come into my nursery and encourage such wickedness. I'll tell your father or your tutor about you."

"And a lot care I if you do, my dearest Nan, but you

have caught a tartar. Who is this lion-cub? For it does not look like one of my small brothers. Whence came we by it?"

"It's the Earl of Cambridge's child, and he has as black and wicked a heart as his father, so needs no encouragement from you. Come, hand him here. I'll give him the other half of the whipping he deserves."

"No, Nan, the little beggar's had enough. Have a heart, Nan, have a heart! I don't suppose the gentleman has ever had hand be put on him. Ever been whipped before, little 'un?"

"No von eber dared. Hang me that vile vitch. Hang her, hang her and then vip her to Newmarket and back, 'ell-'ag."

"Hark at him," said Martha. "Holy Mother protect us! Did you ever hear such a child? Saints preserve us!"

"Now, say you're sorry, and Nan will forgive you," said Richard sharply.

"I'm not sorry, and I won't. Hang her for me."

"Do as I tell you, young man, and now," commanded Nevile.

The child, catching the cold blue eye, felt the power of the man born to command, so obeyed.

Thus began the friendship which only ended in death on the bloody plain of Wakefield.

CHAPTER II

NEWS OF AGINCOURT

RABY was more than a castle. The staff alone was enormous without counting the earl's private army. There were the huntsmen, foresters, dog-feeders or berners, falconers, stablemen, armourers, smiths, millers, carpenters, masons, besides cellarers, brewers, chamberlains, grooms of the chamber, chaplains, laundrymen, maids, and cooks without number. There was, besides this ordinary retinue of a great castle, a regular school for young knights and squires. The very highest in the land considered it a great privilege to be allowed to send their sons to learn the laws and usages of chivalry under the noble Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmoreland, Lord of Raby. He was universally acknowledged to be the pattern of a "very, parfit knight" and the model all young men should aspire to copy.

The Earl had made good use of this school, by procuring as husbands for five of the seven daughters of his first marriage the most eligible young men of the neighbourhood. For two daughters of his second marriage—Catherine and Eleanor—he had secured, by judicial purchase from the King of the Wardships of distinguished minors which gave him the right of selecting wives for them, the hands of the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Northumberland.

Unfortunately, as we shall see, even the nearest family tie failed to keep the two great houses of Neville and Percy at peace.

At the time that our story begins part of Lord Westmoreland's army was away in France with his two elder sons, Ralph and John, and part with him at Carlisle, where he and his son-in-law, Lord Scroop of Bolton, were holding the Marches. The Scots never lost an opportunity of stabbing England in the back when she was engaged with another enemy.

Here at Raby young Richard soon fell into line, and was delighted to find something smaller than himself, whom he could lord it over and protect in the person of baby Cecily, who was about 18 months his junior.

Cuthbert, Henry, and Thomas were not very much older than Richard and still in the nursery: so he had plenty of playmates to lick him into shape. Soon after his arrival, Lord Westmoreland came on a short visit from the Marches. He was a tall man, deep of chest, and with a kindly face. He had the flaxen hair and blue eyes of the Saxons, which had come to him and all his race together with Raby Castle from Maldred's daughter.

He was forty-eight (b. 1367), which was reckoned at that time to be quite past middle-age. He affected the fashions of the Edwards, and had a long curling yellow moustache. Hair on the face had gone out of fashion when Prince Hal became King, but this made no difference to the Earl.

Towards the close of a November day, Westmoreland, surrounded by his family and retainers, was seated at dinner when a great noise was heard coming from the outer courtyard.

"A Nevile! A Nevile! Hurrah, hurrah! A Nevile!" rent the air. All sprang to their feet, the men-at-arms surging to the door. Only Lord Westmoreland remained seated pulling his long moustache.

"What the devil's all this noise?" he said to one of

his squires, who hastened down the great hall. The men struggling at the door gave inwards and broke back like a wave, dividing into two ranks, which took up the cheer.

Through this lane advanced a fair handsome man, travel-stained and weary, accompanied by a stranger in a gorgeous but much bedraggled and hacked surcoat.

"Welcome! Welcome home!" cried his father, "for you must bring glad tidings from France, else you would not be here. Welcome, my son."

By this time the pair had advanced up the Hall. Westmoreland looked at the stranger, bowed to him.

"You, too, sir, are welcome, though you come without your sword. I trust we shall make your stay pleasant here amongst us, till your friends ransom you. Cuthbert, assist this gentleman to a seat beside me; Richard, fetch him a cup of wine, for he must be weary from his long ride. I trust, sir, you suffer no other ill from the mischance of war." He held out his hand. "You are, I see, of the house of Brittany."

"Yes, my lord, I am Arthur, Count de Richmond, and thank you for your welcome. I reckon myself lucky to have fallen into the hands of a Nevile, for to be vanquished in fair fight by a son of that house is no dishonour."

"Fortune of war, sir; fortune of war! A trip of a horse or stumble over a fallen man, and one is down: and if the line falls back, no chance to rise again. But I deem myself fortunate to be honoured by the company of a son of so noble a house. I pledge you in this cup of Gascony."

The two men drank and the Earl presented his son Richard, asking his enforced guest to be seated. Not till then did he turn to his son.

"How are you, my good Ralph: and how comes it you

have left the army so soon? Is your brother whole and hale?"

"Yes, happily he is unscathed, and also your brother the Duke of Exeter," he continued, bowing stiffly to Lady Westmoreland. There was no love lost between the Earl's first and second family. "He had charge of the rearguard, the archers and billmen, and I envied him not his command. A sorrier lot of rascallions and ragamuffins I never saw. As for myself, you have to thank this valiant Count's mace for my presence here," and he bowed to his prisoner, "for it will be many a day before I can use my left arm. As the fighting is over for the year, the King sent me home."

"And your news! Was it a great battle?" said the father.

"Indeed a greater than Crecy or Poitiers."

"Is that so? Tell me about it later, when we are alone: our guest no doubt has heard enough of it; for what is one man's meat is another's poison."

"My lord," said Count Arthur, "I had always heard that the Earl of Westmoreland was a model of chivalry, but now I know it. Still, I see the company is eager to hear the news, so let the good Sir Ralph tell his tale, which you and all in this hall have so good a right to hear. Spare not my feelings, my lord, for I care not whether you English beat these miserable Frenchmen, who by their cowardice and jealousy prevented my brave Bretons ever having a chance. May the Devil take them, and me too, if ever I run with such a pack of curs again. Go to, Sir Ralph, and I will supplement your story with the tale of their blunderings."

"I thank you, Count," said Westmoreland. "Indeed, my people are anxious to hear tell of such great events."

"It happened like this," began Sir Ralph. "The

Count's men, as you have heard, put up a mighty defence at Harfleur, and, but for the great valour of our King, I doubt if we should ever have compassed it. They took fair toll. Then when the King advanced, carrying all before him, it looked as if we should take Paris, but the cursed rain fell and sickness smote the army. First Suffolk died, and then our brother Northumberland fell sick and was forced to leave us. I hope he still lives. He was in a poor way when last I saw him."

"He is mending, I hear, under your sister's care," said his father.

"By October we were in a bad way. It never stopped raining, and the accursed country became a marsh. The King had no choice but to retire on Calais. The French had collected a great host and came on us at Maisoncelles about sixty miles south of Calais. They were marching parallel to us towards Tramecourt. Henry wheeled his columns into line to meet them, but although they outnumbered us three or four to one, they refused battle and marched into the woods."

"But, Sir Ralph, your pardon," said the Count, "you could scarcely expect us to attack the bravest soldiers in the world uphill: and, Mon Dieu! what a hill! steep and ankle-deep in mud. No, no, it could not be. Those French have not forgotten Poitiers."

"As you will, Count. Next time we got in touch, you were right across our line of advance. God knows we were in no case to fight. Every one was in a wretched condition, but the King was splendid. He must have been just like the Black Prince."¹

"A noble prince indeed," said the Earl. "I remember seeing him when I was a boy, and how proud I felt when he spoke to me. Perhaps that is what made me so hot

¹ Died 1373.

against his son.¹ The miserable feeble fop to shame such a sire!"

"When Sir Walter Hungerford wished 10,000 archers² which did lie abed that day Henry would have none of it, saying if we were to die, we were enough, but if to live and win, why he would not share the honour with one man more, and that all who had no stomach for the fight might depart for he would not deign to die in such man's company. I tell you, he put new life into us. Not one man left the army, they say, and many poor fellows, who from hunger and dysentery had no stomach left, got up from their bed of straw and joined the ranks."

"His Highness was indeed rash to hazard his person at such odds; did he make no effort to avoid a battle?"

"Some say he sent to demand on what terms he could have safe passage to Calais, but when they said he must for ever forfeit all claims to his throne of France, he replied that what God had given him was not his to renounce, and at all events if he could not live and be King of France, God willing he would die so.

"The French were drawn up between two woods about half a mile apart, with Tramcourt on their left and Agincourt on the right. The ground was slightly against us, and why they did not sweep down on us with their cavalry, which alone outnumbered our whole force, and annihilate us, God alone knows."

"Not so," smiled the Count, "for I am not God, and I know."

"Perhaps, sir," said Westmoreland, "if it violates not your knightly honour, you will tell us."

"Right gladly will I," replied the Count, draining his cup, which a page at once refilled, "if only to vindicate

¹ Richard II. Westmoreland was one of Henry IV.'s greatest supporters.

² The Earl of Westmoreland was not at Agincourt, although Shakespeare says he was. (*Henry V.*, iv. 3.)

my brave Bretons and show up those haughty windbags of Frenchmen. Parbleu, what men! Mille tonnerres! They would neither fight and enforce their own terms, nor flee and accept yours. Talk! talk! talk! with the best soldiers in Europe at their throats. Believe me, mon ami, or believe me not, at nine o'clock we had no order of battle. Mon Dieu! At seven the Marshal had wanted to retire."

"But what were the King or the Dauphin doing?" asked Westmoreland.

"Doing? How should I know what they were doing? They weren't there, nor the Dukes of Berri or Burgundy. My brother, he could not come either. They would not give him command. They sent that calf, that mutton Orleans! What would you? Who could be expected to obey an imbecile? There was Constable d'Albret, whom the King had given the Oriflamme and made Constable, but you could not expect us nobles of the blood to take their orders from a man little better than a peasant. It was insupportable. They wanted to put me and my brave Bretons in the rear, but naturally I could not allow that with Orleans and Bourbon's Paris rabble running through us if defeated, and taking all credit if we won. The Constable and Marshal finally agreed to fight, if attacked, and arranged to command the right wing—Orleans and Bourbon the centre, and Count d'Eu and myself the left. Then, as the space was so small, the Constable wanted us to fight on foot like you English: when I objected, that popinjay Orleans suggested it was because we could run away quicker. I would have thrust the words down his throat if d'Eu had not stopped me.

"It was decided to divide our army into three divisions. The Counts Nevers and Vaudemont with the

Dukes of Bar and Alençon were with the second line, but, I heard, could not decide who was in command; and as the leaders were all in the front rank, it gave you a great advantage when your advance checked after our first line had broken."

"But in what formation were we?" asked Westmoreland.

"As I told you," broke in Sir Ralph, "when we refused the French terms, Henry rode down the ranks putting new life into the soldiers. What there was of us he formed into one line, four deep, with archers thrown out in six wedges. The Duke of York, God rest his soul, commanded the right, Lord Camoys the left, the King and the Princes being in the centre."

Looking up quickly at the mention of York, the father and son exchanged glances.

"A more honourable death than the scoundrel deserved," muttered the Earl. "A man in these times has a right to choose his side, but once chosen he should stick to it. He undoubtedly betrayed Salisbury and the others over the Windsor plot,¹ and I'll wager was deeper in the last one than Cambridge. But go on, my son."

"Old Sir Thomas Erpingham was Marshal," continued Sir Ralph. "What a tough old bird he is! must be well over fifty. Well, he tossed up his baton, and with a yell the whole line advanced about three hundred yards. There we halted and the archers planted their six-foot stakes to keep off the cavalry, and proceeded to send our friends a few souvenirs."

"Souvenirs! très bon!" laughed the Count. "Many will remember them to their dying day, and many have."

¹ The Earls of Salisbury, Kent, Huntingdon, Despencer and Rutland, as York then was, conspired to seize and murder Henry IV. at Windsor in December, 1400. Rutland was supposed to have betrayed them and then warned them of the King's proposed revenge.

"The cavalry then seemed about to come through and attack us on both flanks, but very few actually charged, though we could see great masses in the rear."

"That is easily explained," said the Count. "There was no room for mounted men, not even for the archers and cross-bow men; for you see we so confidently expected victory, as all brave men should, that we feared the second line would never have a chance of being engaged. With our overwhelming numbers, we expected to run right over you, which we should have done if it had not been for your cursed archers. Parbleu, they should not be allowed when gentlemen fight. It is bad enough to have to fight on foot without having a churl battering your back with a lump of lead at the end of a string. Barbarous! Barbarous! But pardon my heat, and listen to what happened. By the God in Heaven! my lord, you will agree it was not fair. We advanced over a bog; stumbling over dead and wounded horses. Then we came to your archers. They would not run away, but stopped behind their cursed stakes and divided our line into three columns. We ignored them and pressed on. We hurled our might against your line. It bends. With my own hand I strike down the Earl of Suffolk. The whole of your army gives ground."

"But, noble Count, you will I think agree with me that my men stood stoutly," put in Sir Ralph.

"Ma foi, yes. I never saw villeins stand up to knights as they did. How do you make them do it, my lord?"

"Maybe it is because they are free men and fight because they like it," said Westmoreland, and then turning to the hall, he said, "Hear you what this noble Prince of Brittany says, that he never saw men fight as you Yorkshire tykes did. Thank the Saints you are good for something, for a lazier pack of deer-stealers than

Sir Ralph took out, I never knew," but the old eyes shone with pride.

The men and women below the salt answered with a roar. They saw the pride in their chief's glance and appreciated the joke. As if by magic, every man found his horn full of good strong Spanish wine. The head butler knew his master's wishes without being told.

"As I was saying," continued the Count, "for all your victory we were pushing you back. Was it not so, mon ami? We shouted for victory. There is a cry, your King is down. I look about me for one worthy. I see the argent saltire on gules—we engage—we exchange mighty blows. Eh? Sir Ralph, you agree? I am becoming victorious, Sir Ralph's sword is down. One more blow and I call on him to yield, for it is no shame for any man to yield to one of the house of Brittany. But what happened? My whole body rings like an iron pot. I am so pressed in on all sides that I can't turn, and a hideous savage is pounding me with a lump of lead, as if he were beating out a basnet. Naked he was, without even a helmet, attacking knights and gentles in plate armour with a lump of lead! Did you ever hear the like of it? Mon Dieu! What a people! I stumble and I fall; more fall on me, and I would be dead but your sweet son orders this savage to unbury me. He knew the animal by name. 'Jack,' I heard him say, 'help me to get this fellow out, for he's worth his weight in gold, and my arm's broken.' 'Then I'll pound his brains out,' says the savage. 'No you don't, for he's worth more alive than dead.'"

The Count turned to Sir Ralph with a curl on his lip. Sir Ralph blushed. He was a Yorkshireman before ever he had been a knight.

"Your pardon, Count," he said. "I never knew you

had heard my churlish words. You know not our dalesmen. You must manage them in their own way. You know the man, father; Long Jack Langton from Abbotsford, whose father was hanged for deer-stealing. He would undoubtedly have killed you, Count, when he knew you had hurt me, and you had battered me too much for me to have been able to stop him. It was only by appealing to his predatory instincts, and making him understand you were more use to me alive than dead, that I could stop him."

"But why?" said the astonished Breton. "Did you not say you had hanged his father?"

"What's that to do with it?" replied Sir Ralph. "He knew he richly deserved it. We Yorkshiremen don't grumble when we lose. We know if we grumble, we must pay forfeit; besides he'd been let off at least once."

"But have you no blood-feuds?" asked the Count.

"Good God! No," replied the Earl. "How could we and the Percys live if we did? We have been marrying and fighting, fighting and marrying each other for generations, but bear no ill-will. My mother was Hotspur's daughter and his mother was my father's sister, but that did not stop me fighting him, unfortunately with fatal results, at Shrewsbury, or marrying my daughter to his son."

"A strange people," murmured the Count, emptying his glass.

"Tell me, my son, what happened? I fear I am very stupid, Count," said the Earl, bowing; "but I did not quite follow."

"After the cavalry attack had failed, the archers so stung the French that they advanced on us. The retiring horsemen broke up their line; and what with the mud and wounded horses, as the Count said, by the time they

reached the point of the archers' palisades all regular formation was gone. You see, the archers were like this. Our line ran along the crack of this table so. The archers were in six bands so," and Sir Ralph placed some knives and crusts of bread to form six triangles jutting out from the crack of the table.

"The French line advancing met these breakwaters of stakes and broke up into three columns. The centre of each, as you see, has nothing to oppose it, but the flanks as they got to the bases of the archers' triangular palisades got squeezed into the centre of each column. When they had used all their arrows, the archers drew any weapon they had, and, leaving their palisades, fell on the flanks of the French columns, who were already too tightly packed to move or use their arms properly. Most of them carried spears which were quite useless, for there was not even room to use their swords.

"It was here the King was so magnificent. As our line gave ground, Gloucester was beaten to his knees. Henry ran forward and stood over him. Holy Mary, what a man! I saw his helm after the fight. Half the crown was shorn off, and it was dented like a tinker's kettle; but he made a rampart of corpses as high as his waist or higher to protect his brother. When the archers' attack began to be felt, all was over. The Duke of Brabant tried a charge, but the ground was too cumbered for it to make any headway, and, after a bolt had killed the Duke, the rest retired. The second line never had a chance. They were far too broken up by the retreat of their own first line and cavalry to be able to resist, and we were so close on their heels that they could not distinguish friend from foe. After a stout resistance, they gave ground. The rear division, seeing all was lost, retired,

but their leaders stood their ground and died most gallantly.

"We were in no shape to pursue; in fact, with so many foes round us, we knew not if the day was ours or not. A body of about 600 horse was going to attack us. The King, therefore, sent word that if they did not retire he would have to kill the prisoners who, by this time, outnumbered our whole force. Alas, some fool mistook this message as an order, but, as I have assured you, Count, we all most deeply regret it, and no one more than the King. He swore he'd hang the man if he could find him. Indeed we are sorry."

"Do not trouble yourself, Sir Ralph," said the Count with a shrug of his shoulders; "war is made up of mistakes; and I am informed that only a few of Orleans' cowardly rabble suffered. A pity he was not amongst them."

"But," said Westmoreland, "I cannot understand why you did not use your cavalry."

"Oh, that is easy to explain," replied the Count lightly. "It was primarily the fault of the Constable d'Albret. I have told you he did not want to fight, saying that we had only to wait a day or two and you must surrender from starvation. What glory in taking a starved foe? He spoke just like the peasant he is, or ought to be. He it was who insisted that, if we fought, we must fight on foot, as he did not want another Crecy. The front was so narrow that there was hardly room for all the knights and gentlemen, who naturally insisted on being in the front rank. Then I told you how Orleans had insulted me at the council. Well, when first you advanced, the Constable sent the mounted men-at-arms to attack your flanks. They tried to pass through my ranks. No! No! said I, if I and my nobles have to fight on foot we'll have

no villeins on horseback in front of us! So I sent them back to my lord Duke of Orleans with a message that they could carry him out of the battle, or break the line for him if his Frenchmen could not. We Bretons wanted no such aid. Was I not right, my lord? Would you not have done the same in my place?"

"You indeed did a great service, Count," said his host, exchanging a glance with his son, while the Count emptied his wine cup, not for the first time.

"Glad you agree with me," said the Count, "for I hear the calf lows mightily against me for his own stupidity."

"I fear your losses must have been grievous."

"Alas, yes, the Dukes of Brabant, Alençon, and Bar, the Counts of Nevers, Marle, Vaudemont, Blamont, Grandprie, Roussy and Fauquemberg and at least a hundred knight-bannerets as well as the old Constable, the Admiral, and the Grand Master of the Cross-bowmen were all left on the field. About 6000 soldiers, the Dukes of Orleans, Bourbon, Counts Vendome, d'Eu, and myself, with the old Marshal Boucicault fell into your hands."

"Our losses were very light," said Sir Ralph. "Owing to the fortune of war, you were too tightly packed to use your arms and were greatly overrun by your fellows; yet we lost the noble Duke of York, the Earl of Suffolk, who lived not long to enjoy his patrimony, Sir Richard Knightley of Fawsley and Sir Davy Gam, who called himself Lord of Wales. But I had forgotten! You have young Cambridge here. I have Letters Patent to him from the King. I am, I fear, a tardy messenger."

"Indeed," said Westmoreland sternly, "you have done ill to forget your duty in your talk. Send for Lord Richard at once."

"My Lord," said Lady Westmoreland, "the child is abed by now. Will not to-morrow do?"

"The King's commands await not, madam," said the Earl. "Know you the purport of these letters?"

"Yes, sir," replied Sir Ralph. "Before the battle, the Duke of York asked the King, in the event of his falling, to continue his line through his brother's son. So Henry's first act, when he heard the Duke was dead, was to cause Letters Patent to be issued making this child Duke of York with all its heritage as well as Earl of Cambridge. If Mortimer dies childless, he'll be the richest man in England."

"Is my wardship confirmed?" asked Westmoreland anxiously.

"Yes, dear father, John saw to that. We thought this child would be a good match for baby Cecily."

Ralph handed his father the imposing document. Meanwhile, Lord Richard's voice could be heard protesting about his hair being combed as he was hurried to the great hall.

"Come here, child," said Westmoreland, "and hear the pleasure of your King towards you."

The small boy toddled fearlessly up the hall.

"Stop," said his guardian as rising he proceeded to read in a clear voice the King's Patent, for he was one of the nobles who could read. Its Norman Latin was quite unintelligible to young Richard, so the Earl explained it to him in English.

"So now by the pleasure of King Henry V. you are the very high and puissant Duke of York, Earl of Cambridge and Rutland, to have and to hold all castles, lands, rights, fees, etc., belonging and adhering thereto."

The child looked up into the old man's face. He was

deeply interested about it all. He gathered something good was coming to him.

"Yes," he said. "Can I have some mulled sack?"

"Certainly not," said Lady Westmoreland, snatching him up and carrying him off. "Mulled sack, indeed! I've hardly got you right after Robert Waterton and his mulled sack."

"Such is life," smiled the Count; "you get a dukedom and two earldoms the same day, and for a woman's whim they aren't worth a cup of sack to you. Such is life, you will find, my little Duke."

"When I have a castle of my own, I shall have mulled sack every day," said the Duke from over Lady Westmoreland's shoulder.

Upstairs he confided to the tiny Cecily that now he was a duke he would hang Lady Grey. When he propounded the idea to the other young Nevilles, they promptly smacked his head. They were all in favour of the execution, but she was their Nan, and duke or no duke, it was gross presumption on young Richard's part to suggest interfering with a Neville retainer.

For the next ten years life ran very smoothly for Richard and Cecily. They formed a sort of defensive alliance against the others.

Whenever York could get away, he toddled after Richard, who, touched by his devotion, often stopped his brothers bullying the little fellow. He taught him to box, showing him where and how to hit, how to time his big toe and fist to work together, and land just on the end of the nose as its owner lunges forward. It made Masters Harry and Tom, who had not yet learnt this art, respect their small playfellow, for when goaded beyond a certain point he would fly into an ungovernable rage and become really dangerous. York had far more hold

over the family temper than the majority of the Plantagenets, which made him the more dangerous when he did lose control.

The whole atmosphere of Richard's boyhood was Nevile. The old Earl was the sun round which the planets revolved, so that everything was viewed from the Nevile standpoint. York had entered this Nevile world far too young to have any ideas of his own, and having no clan of his own, easily grew up as one of them. It was assumed that he would in due course marry Cecily and Henry V. no doubt had this in mind when he gave the wardship to the greatest supporter of his house.

The only concrete advantage Richard received from his accession to the Dukedom of York was an illuminated manuscript of very great beauty. This he was allowed to look at as a very great treat under the supervision of the old priest, who had charge of the books and accounts of the castle. An illuminated manuscript of the fifteenth century does not sound very exciting fare for a child, but this one was not an ordinary missal. It told all about the greater and lesser beasts of warren, their habits and how they were taken. It told about all the different kinds of hounds and their treatment in sickness and in health. Above all, it had numerous pictures beautifully illuminated and enriched with burnished gold and silver; besides, all capitals were painted with foxes and hares and other beasts and birds running about them. It was, in fact, the author's copy of the oldest and still the most beautiful book on hunting in the English language—*The Master of Game* by Edward, 2nd Duke of York,¹ written while he was in prison in the year 1405.

Though reading and writing were only beginning to be a necessary accomplishment of gentlemen, little boys

¹ Manuscript Room, British Museum.

had to learn a great deal. Before they might wear it, they had to know the names of the forty-seven different pieces which constituted a suit of armour. Before they went out hunting, they had to know all the hunting terms and the collective plurals of each animal, a fall of woodcock, a covey of partridges, a gaggle of geese, a pride of lions, a couple of hounds, and the difference between a stagget, a brocket, a bullock, a buck, a stag, a hart, a calf, a doe, a hind, a slot, a pad, a trace and much more. Not to be familiar with these hundred and one terms, or even to make a single slip, constituted an unforgivable crime; for it showed lack of high breeding.

CHAPTER III

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE FORGOTTEN THEIR HISTORY

FROM Agincourt to his death in 1422, King Henry had blazed a trail of glory. His country, of which he saw less than any English monarch since Richard Cœur de Lion, treated him with the same idolatry and generosity. They offered their sons and treasure without stint and without complaint on the altar of Moloch. Young men became broken down veterans at thirty and died worn out old men at fifty.

Henry fell a victim of his own ambition. By the Treaty of Troyes, one of the most unjust ever imposed on a free people, he obtained a wife and the reversion of the Crown of France. By this wife he got a weakling son, whose inheritance of that Crown cost him the Throne of England and his life.

Henry V. was soon followed to the grave by his young captains. His brother Clarence had preceded him, killed at the battle of Baugé in 1421. Lord Nevile died of disease in 1423, and Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, broken down in health, retired from the army only to die childless in Ireland two years later. The Earl of Westmoreland and Duke of Exeter quickly followed. The death of the Earl of March made a vital difference to his nephew, the Duke of York, who inherited from him not only the vast domains of Mortimer, de Burgh, Clarence, Ferrers and Bauldmore, besides the earldoms of March, Clare, Cork and Ulster, but something far more dangerous, the true hereditary title to the throne of England.

During these early years York had no doubt travelled about from one great castle of the North to another, some belonging to Westmoreland, and some to himself, of which his guardian had the use. The household and retinue of great nobles of this period were far too large for a single estate to support all the year round, so they habitually moved from one to another, where they would remain till the stores were exhausted.

The death of Henry V. affected the lives of Richard and Cecily since it necessitated a move to London, the late King having appointed Lord Westmoreland a member of the Council of Regency. At the age of nine months Henry VI. succeeded his father. At the age of ten months he succeeded to the throne of France on the death of his grandfather, Charles VI., from whom he had already come by the fatal inheritance of a feeble mind and diseased body.

Lady Westmoreland's two brothers, great-great-uncles of the young king, occupied some of the highest offices of State. Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter, had been left guardian of the King's person. Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, was Chancellor, and their nephew, John, Earl of Somerset, Lieutenant-General of Aquitaine and Normandy.

As for the King's uncles, John, Duke of Bedford, was left Regent of France, and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, Regent of England.

Cardinal Beaufort realised that if Gloucester, with whom he had already quarrelled, became Regent, they would soon be ousted from power; they, therefore, appealed to Parliament. The decision given was that Henry V. had no right to lay down how the country should be governed after his death, and a council of Regency was appointed of which Gloucester was

only first member with his power very clearly defined.

This Council of Regency consisted of—

Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester; d. 1447.

John Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury; d. 1443.

Henry, Cardinal Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester; d. 1447.

Thomas Kemp, Bishop of London, Cardinal Archbishop Canterbury and Lord Chancellor; d. 1453.

William Alnewick, Bishop of Norwich; d. 1449.

Thomas Polton, Bishop of Worcester; d. 1449.

Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter; d. 1426, 27th Dec.

Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March; d. 1424. Uncle of Richard, Duke of York.

John Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk; d. 1432. Earl Marshal created Duke 1424; m. Catherine Nevile.

Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick; d. 1439. His son married Cecily Nevile of Salisbury. His daughter married Richard Nevile, the King-maker.

Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, 3rd Earl; k. 1455; m. Eleanor Nevile.

Ralph Nevile, 1st Earl of Westmoreland; d. 1425.

Henry FitzHugh, 3rd Baron; Grandfather of Alice Nevile; d. Holy Land, 1425.

Ralph Cromwell, 4th Baron; d. 1455. His granddaughter m. Thomas Nevile of Salisbury.

Sir W. Hungerford, 1st Baron; d. 1449.

John Tiptoft, 1st Baron; d. 1443. Father of Earl of Worcester who married Cecily Nevile, widow of Duke of Warwick.

Sir W. Beauchamp, younger son of B. of Poywick; died before 1449.

It will be noted that with the exception of Northumberland and Cromwell, all these men were dead before the first battle of St. Albans, 1461.

John, Duke of Bedford; d. 1435. Regent of France.
John Beaufort, Duke of Somerset; d. 1444. Lieutenant-General of Aquitaine and Normandy.

A short study of the members of the Council shows that the Beauforts—Neviles and their friends preponderated. Though at this time some of the marriages had not taken place, the fact that they did later proves that the parents were friends and wished to form a closer connection.

Westmoreland's responsibilities in London threw the work of guarding the Marches of Scotland on his eldest son of the second marriage, Richard, and also the duty of arranging the terms for the liberation of the King of Scotland in 1424, and that of conducting him and his bride to Edinburgh. This King had fallen in love with Joan Beaufort, the daughter of Lady Westmoreland's eldest brother, who had died in 1410.

It is a little hard to believe, knowing as much as we do of the Cardinal, that it was by accident that Joan often walked below James's prison window at Windsor. The following year, Richard Nevile married Alice, daughter and heiress of Thomas Montacute, Earl of Salisbury and of Eleanor, daughter of Thomas Holland, Earl of Kent. Soon after this event, Earl Ralph was gathered to his fathers full of years and honours. He was no less than sixty-two years of age, a very old man for the fifteenth century.

The Duke of York at this time was thirteen years old, a strong, thick-set boy, taking far more after his mother,

than his fiery father. He could be led but not driven, and already showed a streak of mulish obstinacy. Cecily was not beautiful at the age of eleven, a big awkward girl with large features and a domineering temper. Richard, who after their nursery days had not seen much of her, had become affianced to her without protest, and no doubt looked forward to the time when he should marry her.

As a matter of fact, no record exists of the time or place of this marriage, but Lord Westmoreland refers to her in his will, dated 1425, as "my daughter Cecily, Duchess of York."

Worry was the chief cause of Westmoreland's death. A Border soldier all his life, he was quite out of his element in court and parliamentary intrigue, and was torn between his natural inclinations to support the Duke of Gloucester and his wife's desire that he should throw in his weight with the Cardinal.

Ever since the death of Henry V. these two had been at each other's throats. Gloucester could never forgive the Cardinal for cutting down his powers as Regent. The first clash had occurred in 1423. Jacqueline, Countess of Holland and Hainault, and first cousin of the Duke of Burgundy, left her second husband, the Duke of Brabant, son of the Duke killed at Agincourt, and came to London, where she naturally was received by Gloucester.

They fell in love and caused a very considerable scandal. This might have been kept more or less quiet, had not Jacqueline petitioned the Pope, Martin V. of Rome, for a divorce. When she could not obtain it from Rome, she petitioned the Antipope, Benedict XIII., who was delighted to grant it her in order to show he was acknowledged in England. On the strength of this decree, she married Gloucester to the scandal of all Europe.

This rash act came at the very worst moment possible

for Bedford was just concluding a treaty with Burgundy and Brittany. Burgundy was naturally furious. Jacqueline's counties of Holland and Hainault fitted in very well with the lands of Burgundy and Brabant, and the Duke had looked forward to the eventual succession of his son to the whole inheritance, which would have formed a very compact kingdom. He had no wish for a foreigner to butt in.

Bedford managed to smooth things down, and during the years 1423 and 1424 he and Burgundy achieved many splendid victories over the Dauphin. They conquered many towns, leaving behind them a trail of glory, a country reduced to a desert, and a people to a state of misery and destitution never before known. Parliament, elated by the success of its arms, raised large reinforcements to carry on this glorious campaign, and Gloucester was appointed to lead them.

Unfortunately, he did not lead them in the right direction. Instead of attacking the Dauphin, he endeavoured to conquer Hainault, which the Duke of Burgundy naturally looked on as an act of war against himself. Thus all he succeeded in doing was to alienate Burgundy and Brittany, England's two allies, and throw them into the arms of France.

He further complicated matters for Bedford by calling Burgundy a liar and refusing to apologise. The result was a challenge to a duel, only prevented by the Pope. Finally in the autumn of 1425 he left Jacqueline at Mons and returned to England accompanied by her lady-in-waiting, Eleanor Cobham, with whom he proceeded to live in open concubinage. The town of Mons surrendered Jacqueline to Burgundy.

The Cardinal in his capacity of Prince of the Church, Lord Chancellor and Gloucester's uncle, having no doubt

spoken his mind out freely, there ensued a furious quarrel.

Nor had things been going any better in England. A plot, which cost Sir John Mortimer of Hatfield his life, had been discovered. There was labour unrest in London. Lord Talbot was at war with his neighbours, and there was trouble brewing between all the younger family of the great Earl of Westmoreland, and Ralph, his grandson, supported by the Percies.

The Council garrisoned the Tower and placed Sir Richard Wodeville, a servant of Bedford, in command. Gloucester, putting himself at the head of the London malcontents, demanded admission, which Wodeville refused, and both parties flew to arms.

War was only just averted by the tact of Chichele, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Duke of Coimbra, a Portuguese grandson of John of Gaunt, who happened to be in London.

Both sides appealed to Bedford to come over. Poor Bedford, who meanwhile had sought assistance from the Pope and with him settled with Burgundy and stopped the duel, now felt himself compelled to respond to this call as soon as he could with any safety leave France.

The affair at the Tower occurred in October; Bedford arrived in England the following January. A Parliament was then called to meet in Leicester in February. So hostile were the two parties that Bedford had to forbid the carrying of arms. The rivals thereupon got hold of clubs which gave the name of Bats to this Parliament. Bedford, after ten days' wrangling, compelled Gloucester to accept the Cardinal's word, that he was innocent of the absurd charges he had brought against him and to shake hands. The opportunity of this gathering was taken for the knighting of the little King by the Duke of Bedford. The five-year-old Knight then conferred the like honour

on thirty-six others, including the Duke of York, the Earls of Devon, Oxford and the new Westmoreland, and the eldest sons of Norfolk, Northumberland, and Ormonde; all destined to play a prominent part in the young King's life. Several leading citizens of Leicester were honoured at the same time in the ancient hall of the Duke of Lancaster.

Cardinal Beaufort saw clearly the impossibility of his working for long together with Gloucester, so wisely resigned the Great Seal to John Kemp, Archbishop of York.

CHAPTER IV

RICHARD GOES TO THE WARS

AFTER the Parliament of Bats, Gloucester found York a position at the King's court. The young Richard—now aged fourteen—thought the change very pleasant; like leaving the strict discipline of a public school for the freedom of a university.

The war in France continued its normal course. Bedford, greatly assisted by his wretched opponent, Charles VII., and his murderous gang of advisers, was slowly but surely conquering France. In 1428, having wrung some reinforcements out of Parliament, who had grown tired of the war, he gathered a strong force together under Salisbury and Suffolk and sent it down to attack Orleans, while Charles remained at Bourges doing nothing. The siege dragged on through the long winter months. In October Salisbury was killed by a cannon ball, and York's early friend and protector at Raby, Richard Nevile, who had married Salisbury's only daughter, succeeded to the title.

Suddenly out of the blue appeared a force following a banner borne by a sturdy female figure in white armour. On the banner was the figure of Christ between two angels.

True, there had been rumours of a moonstruck girl who had been taken up at the French court, but no one had paid much attention to it.

From Poitiers she sent a message to Salisbury ordering him, in the name of God and La Pucelle, to abandon the

siege or she would compel him. This insolence nearly cost the messenger his life. He was sent back with a reply that the English did not deal with the Devil, would burn his representative, this witch who termed herself La Pucelle, and hang her envoys. She relieved Orleans and delivered defeat after defeat on the English.

The terror that the maid inspired in the English army was so great that the soldiers would hardly face her. But far more than this, she had at last set alight the spirit of France. The people, disheartened by long series of defeats and disgusted with their leaders, had given up all interest in the struggle and did not care who ruled them.

Bedford's policy of governing the French by the French, which for ten years had proved such a success, now showed its weakness. Many of the captains of castles and towns suddenly remembered they were Frenchmen and betrayed his trust in them. Brittany and Burgundy felt the cold draught of defeat and opened separate negotiations with Charles. Arthur of Richmond, the prisoner of Agincourt, in spite of his vow, took service with France and endeavoured to get Charles to dismiss the murderers of Philip of Burgundy's father from his court, for their presence there kept Burgundy his enemy.

So serious did the position become even after the capture of Joan that Bedford sent for the child Henry, to show himself in his southern kingdom, thinking that the King's person and a solemn coronation at Paris would rally the French to his side.

Henry, who had been crowned at Westminster at the age of nine, now accompanied by the Cardinal, the young Duke of York and a great retinue of nobles, came over to France and stopped at Rouen, for the activities of the Maid had rendered Paris unsafe.

There had been little contact between the Cardinal and Richard, who had only recently emerged from the sphere of squiredom. The old man, therefore, sought what opportunities he could to probe into the character of his powerful young kinsman. The court had not long been settled in France when he challenged him to a game of chess. York, who had lately learnt the game from an Italian musician, eagerly accepted.

Things began cautiously, each side waiting for a false move from the other. Beaufort more than once laid a trap for his youthful opponent, but the invitation to fall into it was not accepted.

Then the Duke saw his chance and dashed into the attack, disregarding his losses.

The Cardinal retreated before his fierce onslaught, anxiously considering his every move. No sooner was his finger off the piece than the Duke moved his with certainty.

"Check, my lord."

"Check again," and the Cardinal had to sacrifice a knight.

"Check again, and, I think, mate this time," cried the boy in triumph for the Cardinal was a famous player whom few could beat.

"Yes, it is indeed check mate," replied Beaufort, and he swept his queen across the board, taking his opponent's checking castle which was next the white king.

York's rashness in attack had led him into the trap which the Cardinal had laid during his retreat.

"Life is very like a game of chess, my lad," said the old man, as he swept the board of the carved ivory warriors. "When we feel most certain of victory, then is the time to be cautious; and in both chess and life beware of queens—and other women."

The courtiers who had been watching the game smiled, and York bit his lip in vexation.

"I thank you, my lord, for your lesson," he said, "for how could one so inexperienced hope to beat such a master of the game. I will endeavour to remember your advice."

He needed it too, for he was just seventeen and beginning to feel his own great importance. Gloucester had no doubt removed him from the Nevile tutelage because he feared he would come too much under the Beaufort influence through the Cardinal's sister, Lady Westmoreland. At Raby or Middleham York had been the smallest and least important of a large clan. All the knights, squires, captains, soldiers, huntsmen and grooms were Nevile men and had been for generations. During the four years spent at court, he was, of course, in a subordinate position; but now, in Rouen, he had his own house and servants, his own bodyguards from his own estates, and plenty of people to tell him how far greater a man he was than any of the Neviles, including Richard, now Earl of Salisbury, the god of his youth.

There were ladies, too, ready to sympathise with this rich young duke on the sad fate of being married to one whose intimacy he could not yet enjoy. When he began to compare the appearance and charm of these Frenchwomen with the plain, gawky girl he had left at Middleham five years before, he was inclined to agree that his was indeed a hard lot.

Particularly attractive to him was the society of Madame Lucelle de Coix, the wife of a captain of mercenaries, who was always conveniently at the other end of France. Lucelle was about twenty-five, tall and dark, with great languid brown eyes and full red lips. She lived in a house near the cathedral which, though not

large, was very comfortably furnished; the bishop, taking pity on the poor lady's forlorn state, had seen to that. The beautiful Lucelle, well content to receive spiritual comfort from the bishop, did not consider that this precluded her from being kind to the forlorn young Duke, who seemed so lonely, and might fall into bad company and evil ways if he had nowhere to spend his evenings, and no one to whom he could confide his hopes and sorrows.

About this time, Lady Westmoreland thought it would be wise for Cecily to see a little of her husband. She, therefore, sent her out on a visit to the Cardinal, who was detained at Rouen for the trial of Joan of Arc, which had just begun. In fact, she thought the sooner they were really married the better. Cecily was now nearly sixteen. Many girls were mothers at that age.

Unknown to her family, Cecily had become a violent partisan of the Maid of Orleans.

She had a wild feather under her wing, and had seen a lot more of the prisoners of war than her mother had any idea of; nor was Lady Westmoreland aware that her youngest daughter's father confessor was a Lollard with very advanced views on the rights of man.

When a young man is cutting his puppy teeth, and indulging in his first orgy of soap and slippers, the less he is seen by his future wife, the better; especially if she has been chosen for him. All things considered, therefore, it was not a good time for the visit.

Cecily was at the awkward age, both physically and mentally. Like so many big girls she was slow in her development—all arms and legs. She knew too much in one way and too little in another. She was too old not to know what was going on round her, and too young to understand and make allowances.

York was far from pleased when he heard his future wife was in Rouen. He had been getting on very well without her and felt she would not approve of his friendship with Lucelle or realise there was no harm in it. He was quite right there. She didn't. She said so in very plain language, for she had been brought up among men and believed in plain speaking. Indeed, she went to the trouble of digging out from that forbidden book, the Old Testament, several names to describe the lady, of which "Jezebel" was among the most complimentary.

Madame de Coix was not the only friend of Richard's that Lady Cecily objected to. There were several others with whom he was on terms of easy familiarity. Their talk and jokes made her blush all over, and put her at a disadvantage. She felt herself badly dressed, awkward and uneducated; yet at the same time knew she wasn't. She was wounded in her pride, that Achilles' heel of all her race.

CHAPTER V

CECILY AND THE MAID

"MY dear Cecily, don't be absurd, she is perfectly charming. A man must have friends. If he does not mix with women, he is little better than an animal, like Mathew Gough or Lord de Moleyns. As a man of the world, I flatter myself I know what to do."

"And how long have you been a man?"

"I've been a Knight of the Bath for three years."

"Yes, indeed, knighted the same day as the King, if I remember right. Another man of the world. Does he share your opinion of this painted Jezebel?"

"My dear child, where on earth do you get your awful expressions from!"

York had never heard of Jezebel, and was only sure that it was something uncomplimentary and feared this might be some animal he ought to know about.

"Every one is laughing at you, the way you run after that old woman. You are like a spaniel on a string, or a dancing monkey. Can't you have some respect for yourself, if you have none for me."

"You are too young to know what you're talking about, my child, so let's talk of something else."

"You're not so old yourself as to know everything, great Solon."

"Really, Cecily, you must not use those disgusting epithets. I can't think where you pick them up. Your language is worse than that of a camp follower."

"And a fine lot of camps you've seen. All my brothers, at half your age, too, had won their spurs on the field of battle not on the floor of a broken-down hall in company with a pack of pot-bellied burghers."

York coloured crimson. Cecily had struck hard home.

"One cannot prevent one's rank and birth and what they bring in their train," he said pompously.

"Prince Hal and the Black Prince," she said maliciously, "had whetted their swords at sixteen, but they were, no doubt, far beneath the son of the Earl of Cambridge."

Richard never liked being reminded either of his father Cambridge or of his uncle York, for a pair of more treacherous scoundrels can hardly be found in history.

"I've seen service too," he retorted hotly.

"In my Lady de Coix's boudoir? And was the dear bishop there?"

"By all the saints in heaven!" roared Richard, "you are worse than that witch La Pucelle, whom I fetched in from Beaufort at the risk of my immortal soul."

"Oh, great brave knight, I crave your pardon. I have done you wrong. So you are the brave champion with only 100 men to your back, who brought this Maid to Rouen bound hand and foot. I hope they handed her over to you bound and the gallant Burgundians did not make an extra charge for it. They are better Jews than Judas, for he only got thirty pieces of silver; and John of Luxembourg got 10,000 francs for his countrywoman for fear of whom he deserted his allies. Lucky she had no sword in her hand, or she might have taken Rouen and added you to her collection of brave English knights."

"What? You defend the foul witch?"

"Indeed I do. Since I came to France, I've seen a lot of witches whom I would far rather burn, but they seem to live under the protection of Holy Church, and some pure

and puissant knights of the Bath. What a contempt I have for all you great big cowardly men! You buy a woman for silver, whom you could not face with steel, and then, to cover your cowardice, call her a witch."

Fortunately, they were here interrupted by the arrival of Père Cauchon, the Bishop of Beauvais, Joan's most bitter enemy.

"Here, my Lord Bishop," said York, "is a heretic defending the Pucelle."

"Indeed, I grieve to hear it," said the Bishop, "for I fear she is a limb of Satan, too deeply steeped in sin for salvation. I have just left my confreres of the University of Paris, Jean Beaupère, Guillaume Erard, Thomas de Courcelles and the Inquisitor General, examining her. She is, I fear, too far gone to return to grace."

"I don't understand you, my lord," said Cecily. "Did not four of your brother bishops find nothing but grace in her before she even went to Orleans? And now four other French clerics find nothing but evil in her."

"My child, you are too young to understand these things," said the bishop airily.

Nothing is more calculated to raise the ire of any one, especially a girl, than to be told they are too young to understand; and Cecily had been told it twice in as many minutes. To make matters worse for her, Lucelle, who had now joined the group, gave Richard a superior smile and a familiar touch of the hand, as if in contemptuous pity.

"It is very kind and brave of the English lady to defend my misguided countrywoman," she said.

"That is more than any of her own countrymen do for her," retorted Cecily; "the cowards ran away at Compiègne and left her to defend their rascally backs, and now seventy more of them want to murder her, for

what? Trying to get them to liberate their country from a foreign yoke."

"This is treason," smiled the bishop, "and we are in the King's palace. Has not King Henry a true title to both the thrones of France and England, and is he not going to be crowned in Paris as he was in London with the sanction and blessing of Holy Church?"

"I neither know nor care about such things," said Cecily hotly. "But I do know that we in the north would have neither foreign king nor bishop, for that matter, put over us."

"My child, you are rash and know not what you say. What would your good uncle think if he heard you? The Holy Father rules God's Church here below and sends its sons to the cures where they can best serve it."

"Indeed, I thought it was where they could best serve themselves; but his late Holiness, God rest his soul, found we would have no beggarly foreigners on the Bishop's stool in York Minster."

"Silence, child! How dare you speak thus to a Prince of Holy Church?" Bishop Cauchon retorted. "Be humble and meek when you address me."

"Neviles speak their minds to whom they list, be he King or Pope; and keep swineherds in Yorkshire to speak to pigs."

The bishop stalked away furious. These English girls were indeed badly brought up. He wondered if Joan's father had been an Englishman. That would account for her. York laughed heartily at the discomfiture of his ally, and began to think that there might be something more in this awkward wench than appeared on the surface. Not every girl of sixteen would have had the courage and readiness of wit as well to remind the Right Reverend Bishop Cauchon that his name very closely

resembled the French for "pig." The Cardinal came over and inquired the trouble.

"That French bishop was impertinent to your niece, my lord," said York, the old protective habit of his youth returning, "and he relished not his whipping."

"I trust you were not rude to him," said the old man, "youth should respect age and the Church."

"I only told him that we Neviles spoke our minds freely, and how we lived in Yorkshire. If he took my words amiss, it is his affair. He is a common fellow for all his cope and mitre."

"You should not make such remarks about a bishop, my child," said the Cardinal, who heartily agreed with her.

"The Pope can make any one a bishop, but it takes three generations to make a man a gentleman. Look at Suffolk," laughed York.

"A very able man, but a bad soldier," said the Cardinal.

"What else can you expect from a wool-merchant's grandson?" replied the young Duke.

"I hope, uncle, you will have nothing to do with this trial. It is too cruel—too horrible," said Cecily.

"I think it is better for his Majesty's French subjects to deal with this Frenchwoman. I have attended, true, but really only as a spectator. She will not suffer if she is innocent, her countrymen should be trusted to give her a fair trial." And the Cardinal smiled and passed on.

Lucelle sidled up to Cecily.

"Oh, my lady, you should not become so angry," she said.

"And why not, madam?" said Cecily haughtily.

"Because it does not become you. It makes a shiny nose and a scarlet face."

"Better than a painted one," said the girl rudely, and

turned away nearly in tears. She knew she was behaving like a naughty child and making a fool of herself, nor were her feelings soothed by hearing the silvery voice saying:

"Mon pauvre petit, comme elle est farouche et gauche!"

Unfortunately, she did not hear York's reply. Angry as he had been with Cecily, he had too loyal a nature to allow any one—even his mistress—to run down his little playmate.

Poor Cecily, how she suffered! What wonderful repartees she thought of in the watches of the night! How the Bishop and Lucelle would have wilted at them and the court applauded! Instead they thought her a silly rude child with a red shiny nose. She hit and bit her pillow in her impotent rage.

Her quarrel with York and the Bishop made Cecily more determined to save Joan somehow. She got the Cardinal to take her to one of the sittings of the Court.

Joan's appearance was disappointing. She did not look like a saint or a witch. She looked just like hundreds of other peasant girls. Her face was strong and round, her figure powerful and stocky. Months of imprisonment and ill-treatment had wasted her limbs and stolen the colour from her cheeks.

Cecily had of course heard she wore male attire, but was genuinely horrified at the sight of her, ragged and dirty, in what might once have been white leather drawers over which black hose were laced to a padded tunic.

She faced her ordeal with quiet courage and natural wit. For days on end her French judges had tried to trap her, intimidate her, and confound her. They had failed. She believed that she had seen and spoken to St. Catherine and St. Michael as firmly as she believed she was in prison.

She was as certain that she had been directed by heavenly voices as she was that she was being now questioned by Cauchon and his fellows.

One of her answers impressed Cecily.

"What language did these saints of yours speak?"

"French."

"Not English? You are sure they knew no English?"

"No! No! French. Always French. How do I know if they know English?"

"Did they speak like you?"

"Oh, no! They spoke good French, much better than me."

"How do you know?"

"You recognise a peasant's talk as us peasants recognise you gentles' talk, is it not so?"

"You are a sorceress."

"No."

"Oh, yes, you are. You have taken part in heathen rites. Don't deny it. You have, we know it."

"I have danced round the fairy tree at Domrémy with the other children at Mid-Lent. That was before the voices came."

"Of course, of course. You have to worship the Devil before he comes to you. Why do you wear men's clothes?"

"Because God told me to; and to protect myself from your foul, dirty soldiers."

"Do you suggest that even English gaolers so far forget themselves as to try and defile themselves with you?"

"Yes, and Burgundians too. Not only the gaolers either. One of your great lords attempted me and promised me freedom, if I would lie with him."

"Do you expect us to believe this lie?"

"Yes, for there he stands grinning like an ape."

And she pointed at Lord Warwick.

"My lords," said Warwick hastily, "I did but wish to ascertain if she was a virgin as claimed to be. I offered her no violence."

"You did well, my lord," said the obsequious Inquisitor, "to try and get evidence for the court, even at such great danger to your soul and body. But are you not descended from the giant-killer, Guy of Warwick?" And he smirked and bowed to the great lord, as the Bishop of Beauvais rose to adjourn the court to prevent any further embarrassing details being revealed.

Cecily went straight to the Palace, her face aflame with shame and indignation. She strode through the streets of Rouen as if they were her native moors, the long train of her satin robe dragging unheeded in the mud. She had waited neither for her escort nor her maid as she left the court.

Even at the age of sixteen there was something majestic about this young Nevile. It occurred to no one to attempt to molest or insult her.

On arrival at the palace, she went straight to the Regent's apartments and demanded an immediate interview with the Duchess of Bedford.

Anne of Burgundy was the sister of Philip and the daughter of John the Fearless, the victim of Charles' base treachery at Monteaux. She hated Charles with all the concentrated venom of a really good woman.

She was resting, for she was very ill. She, however, received Cecily but was greatly shocked at her appearance.

"My little niece,"¹ she said, "what brings you here in such a state? It is not seemly or respectful of you to come into my presence in such a filthy condition. You look like a drab who has been pulled through the gutter. Go and make yourself clean and respectable."

¹ Terms of relationship were used rather loosely at this time.

"Pardon, madam," said Cecily. "My state shows the urgency of my cause. Cruel, wicked injustice is afoot, and may be being accomplished at this very moment. I flew here to you, who are so good. Hear me, madam, I pray you by your love of God."

Cecily for the first and last time in her life, threw herself at another woman's feet to pray for mercy.

Anne was touched.

"Rise, child; I will hear you, but what can have so agitated your young mind? Has that bad boy York been too attentive to the fair Lucelle? Men are all like that except Uncle John. He'll tire of her as soon as he has you, my little one."

"Madam," said Cecily, springing to her feet, "do you think I would go to any woman, let alone kneel, for what any man may or may not do with a Rouen strumpet? I came to you for the greatest and bravest woman in the world, who is being foully treated in prison by fiends in the form of men." And Cecily poured out the story she had just heard in Court.

"What can I do?" asked Anne weakly. "I know Philip was wrong to allow John to sell the Maid, witch though she is, to you English. You are so cruel and rough."

"She said the Burgundians were as bad and she's a saint, not a witch," said Cecily, stung to defence of her country and her idol.

"Hush, child. You must not say that. Its almost treason. But what do you want of me, a dying woman?"

"Say not that, my dearest aunt," said Cecily, touched by the resignation of the voice. "Cannot you make the Regent protect this poor maid?"

"I hate to worry him, he has so much to do, and she has wrought him such awful harm."

"I'm sure he would not allow rough beasts to violate

a maiden, for is he not a Knight of the Garter, sworn to uphold justice and innocence?"

"But is she innocent, my child?"

"All men and, I suppose, women are innocent till proved guilty by our laws," said Cecily. "Oh, for the love of Our Holy Mother, intercede for her, as you hope she will do for you before God."

"I will speak to the Regent, if I have a chance, rest assured," said the Duchess in a tired voice.

At that moment the Regent walked in, a tall, thick-set man with a bald, bullet head and a beak-like nose. He had been told that a wild lady of rank had rushed into the palace and gone to the Duchess, and was disturbed at the thought that his wife should be agitated; still, in these times of plot and counterplot, no one knew what might happen and who might bear tidings of great events.

"Oh, John, dear," said the Duchess, "Cecily has just come from the trial with tales of the gaolers violating the Pucelle."

"Indeed?" he replied roughly. "It was probably her own fault, and she encouraged them. They can't expect much chastity from a witch in breeches. I don't envy them."

"But, John," said the Duchess, "such conduct dishonours you. She is your prisoner taken in war, and as such deserves honourable treatment at your hands."

"Sir," said Cecily, "I implore you by your honour as an Englishman, by your oath as knight, and by your faith as a Christian to spare this poor defenceless girl. For I believe she is a saint; and before God, if aught befall her, nothing will go right in your kingdom of France."

Bedford was startled by Cecily's earnestness. Naturally a kind man, with a love of justice, but lacking in im-

agination, thirty years of war had tended to make him hard and callous towards suffering.

He struck a bell and a page entered.

"Run over to the castle," he said to the page who entered, "and tell the governor from me to change the Pucelle's guards and to inform the new ones that I will hang any one of them who offers her disrespect. She is to be safely but honourably kept."

"Oh, thank you, my lord, thank you. I can never repay you, but the Holy Mother of God and Her Babe will."

"I thank you, my child," he said wearily. "There is little one can do in this sad world to relieve suffering. But come away; you have tired my lady enough, you naughty child."

"I hope not, my lord," said Cecily. "I can never thank you enough and now you will save this maid from those horrible Frenchmen. Oh, I am so glad I was rude to that cruel pig of a Bishop of Beauvais."

"My dear Cecily, I will do no such thing," said Bedford. "I am very sorry for the Pucelle, but 'fore God! no one has ever done me the harm she has. Not only has she undone my work of thirteen years, she has injured my reputation as a soldier and a man of courage. They say that I manœuvred round Paris and dared not attack her. That Bedford with a larger army of English was afraid of a maid and a pack of French peasants."

Bedford stopped, going red in the face with the very thought of it.

"That is not true," said Cecily. "No Plantagenet was ever afraid. It's a lie."

"By St. George, except that my army was only half-English, it is true. I dared not attack this Pucelle and feared she would attack me. I certainly could not trust

my troops to take the offensive, for my Norman and French levies would have fled or deserted to her. If La Tremoille had let her have her way, she would have driven us out of France and probably Normandy too."

"Surely you should honour such a foe," said Cecily.

"Yes, and no," replied the Regent. "There must be some supernatural power, which enables the girl to make these Frenchmen fight. At one time she almost made a man out of the Dauphin. Do you know that if Orleans had not fallen two years ago, the resistance of France to the King would have collapsed? My policy was bearing fruit. The French were beginning to see that Henry would be a better ruler for them than Charles, and that he wished to rule as their legitimate King not as a conqueror. They only wanted to see him amongst them and all would have been well. I had hoped then to retire to England and rest. I have never had a rest since I was thirteen, and feel a worn-out old man. Even at home I had made peace of a sort between my brother and uncle. And now the Pucelle has brought all my labours about my ears like a card castle, and above all my lady is sick." Bedford heaved a heavy sigh.

"My poor uncle," said Cecily, gently putting her hand on the bowed grey head.

"This maid is not only worth 1000 lances in the field; that I could face. It is the intrigue behind me, underneath my feet, that defeats me." And he struck the table with his fist.

"I don't know why I tell you all this," he continued, "but since Salisbury, Talbot, Suffolk and Hungerford have gone, I have hardly any one to speak to. These young men the King has brought do not understand. Look you, before the Maid arrived, I could garrison every town with loyal French and Norman captains.

They despised the Dauphin more than they hated us, anyway, and put up stout resistance if attacked. Now I cannot rely on a single one of them not to open the gates, unless I have an English garrison to stop them. Look at my allies, Philip of Burgundy and Francis of Brittany. After Agincourt, Francis and Arthur swore they would never serve with France again. Burgundy would have joined his father's murderers if I had not bribed him with more than half our conquests. Brittany is now at war with us, and Arthur is Constable of France."

"Surely the Duchess of Gloucester is more to blame for Burgundy's desertion than the Maid," said Cecily. She thought it more tactful to say Duchess than Duke.

"You are right. She has bewitched poor Humphrey as the Maid has bewitched all the Frenchmen," said Bedford. "I only wish I could burn them both at the same stake."

"Surely you would never let them burn the Pucelle." Cecily's eyes opened wide with horror.

"That has nothing to do with me," said Bedford. "I bought her for a great price and will see she never goes free again to rouse France against her King. If her holy compatriots and the learned University of Paris, assisted by the Pope's Inquisitor, find her to be a witch and a heretic against the Holy Catholic Church, I shan't be sorry, for it will put heart into my troops and explain the ignominious defeats we have suffered. Before St. George and St. Michael, I would not force any man's hand against the Maid; but, by God and All His Angels, I will not interfere with the verdict and sentence of Holy Church on one of their own countrywomen, who has wrought such dire harm on me and mine. Now leave me for I have much business."

CHAPTER VI

A COLD FACT KILLS A GREAT IDEAL

ALL through the spring the trial dragged its weary course. The bishops bullied and cajoled, examined and re-examined, threatened and flattered this simple peasant maid. A special court of fifty assessors considered the opinions of the University of Paris and prayed the child Henry VI. to bring the Pucelle to speedy justice.

On one occasion Cauchon told her that unless she recanted she would be tortured. The tormentors with the instruments were brought in, but she remained firm to her faith. That she was not tortured was due to the fact that when her thirteen accusers were consulted, they voted ten to three against it.¹

On May 24th an imposing spectacle was staged in the churchyard of St. Ouen.

A grand stand was set for the judges and assessors, with whom on this occasion were Cardinal Beaufort, Master de Courcelles, one of Joan's most prominent accusers, and four bishops, but Bedford was not among them, he was away in Normandy.

Erard, Canon of Rouen, exhorted the Maid to recant and confess. She appealed to the Pope. The executioners were produced with a cart to take her to the stake. For a year she had suffered confinement. For six months, day after day, she had stood up alone confronted by her countrymen, who were determined on her destruction. This simple peasant had been pitted against the cleverest men in the Church of France and the University of Paris.

¹ Cauchon edited the official record of the trial, carefully omitting in the Latin version the fact that he had voted in favour of torture, but unfortunately forgot to destroy the notes in the original French from which he compiled it.

She had been starved, assaulted, threatened with torture and a horrible death. Is it surprising that she gave way at last? She was alone surrounded by a mob of brutal soldiers thirsting for her blood and faced by a bank of high episcopal dignitaries of the Holy Catholic Church, no less brutal or bloodthirsty than the mob they hounded on. Instead, there were promises of kind treatment in a convent and no more brutal gaolers, whom she lived in fear of night and day; peace and quiet to hear her Voices and commune with her saints. The thunder of that awful voice of Erard, a paper she could not read, a pen she could not wield, a mark! There! There! And then peace and quiet.

The effect on Cecily of these events can be imagined. She had watched the farce in the churchyard of St. Ouen. She had held her breath as the executioners came forward to carry Joan to death. She did not know whether she was crying from relief or grief, when Joan put her hand to the paper. The sentence of imprisonment on bread of sorrow and water of affliction was such an anti-climax. Joan was led back to her prison and resumed female attire.

Though the confession was what Bedford wanted to save the face of his army and re-kindle their old spirit, he had no intention of surrendering Joan to any one. His prisoner she was, and his prisoner she should remain. Warwick, who was in charge during Bedford's absence, refused point blank to give her up to the Church.

Joan, with all the peasant obstinacy, felt she had been cheated when she was taken back and still kept in the English prison. The bargain had not been kept. She put on her male attire again.

This was Cauchon's chance. She had recanted; she had relapsed. She was beyond hope.

Cecily, when she heard that Joan was to be burnt the

following day (May 30th, 1431) was nearly out of her mind. She knew it was useless to go to Warwick. The Cardinal, by sitting with the judges, had assented to Joan's condemnation. She must escape. She must be rescued. There were two ways, force or bribery, but Cecily had no large sum of money nor any valuable jewels, except her engagement ring.

None of her brothers happened to be in Rouen that day; the Nevilles all preferred the castle to the court, but something had to be done. There was only York to turn to. He would not fail her, she was sure. But how to get to him? She could not bring him to the Cardinal's palace, their meeting would be seen and noticed, so she must go to his house. She had heard him say he was supping there.

She called her maid to get her cloak, and, pulling it about her face, sailed forth alone. Even had she thought of the danger, it would not have deterred her. She was a Neville, to whom danger was the breath of life. That the city was full of the best professional cut-throats and black-guards of Europe for ever on the prowl like the hungry wolves they resembled, did not stop her. She felt that she, like Joan, had a mission.

York's house was in the main street. She reached it without serious molestation. Her haughty stare at any who looked at her saved her annoyance. Several soldiers were lounging against the wall, but on her stopping at the door their leader saluted her. The door was opened to her knock by the Duke, and she entered a fair-sized room by the window of which there were two chairs and a table bearing a flagon of wine, some silver cups, and a basket of fruit. The young Duke's suits of armour stood like sentinels beside the fireplace and in the corners of the rooms. His swords and banners formed the only

decoration on the bare walls. In the corner farthest from the door was a kind of tent covered with red and blue silk embroidered with coats-of-arms; inside this was the bed.

She was relieved to find him alone.

"My dearest Cecily," said York in great surprise. "You? And alone! What can have brought you here?"

"I had to see you, Richard, dear, there is no one else I could turn to."

"Why did you not send for me? This city is hardly safe for men, let alone women. You might have been raped and murdered."

"You must save the Pucelle," said Cecily, too eager to argue or explain.

"Save the Pucelle! You must be mad!"

"You must! You must! You must! There is no one else."

"But she is a condemned witch and heretic. Why must I save her?"

"Because she's a saint; and if we martyr Christ's saints, nothing can go well with us afterwards. It will bring a curse on all who dwell in this city."

"But how d'you know she is a saint?"

"Because I do," was Cecily's logical reply; "just the same as she knows, and therefore defeats our armies so often."

"But I can't save her, if I would," he said, bewildered. "I can go to Bedford, but he will only tell me to go to the devil. Besides, he's away."

"I know, or I would have gone to him myself," she said. "So you must save her. Can't you bribe the gaolers or something?"

"But why should I? It would be treason and a crime as well."

"Don't you see, that you and every Englishman will be for ever disgraced if you murder a woman in cold blood, whom you dared not meet sword in hand in the

open field. Don't you see it will bring God's curse on all your heads! Oh, Richard, be glorious, be like your namesake the Lion-hearted, and carve your way to rescue this maiden in distress. Be like the great Perseus and Arthur's knights. Be the one man who stood before the whole world and its Church for right and justice. In a year or two those who may now blame you will be calling down the blessing of heaven on your head for saving their honour from this unspeakable infamy. Demand to see her. Take me with you. We can change clothes. I can take her place. I care not if they kill me, if only she and the honour of England are saved."

"My dearest one, I would not sacrifice you for a hundred Pucelles," replied York, half-carried away by her vehemence.

"Unless you do something I will never speak to you again. Oh, Richard, darling"—and Cecily threw her arms round his neck; "my own dear one, you will not fail me, I know you won't."

Her enthusiasm was infectious; it fired him. He had supped well, and the sparkling wine of France is heady.

"By the Holy Grail," he said, "I believe you're right. Let's see what we can do."

"*Mon chéri*," said a quiet voice; "come back to earth."

The young lovers started apart; Lucelle emerged from the tent in the corner, where she had hidden on Cecily's entry. Carried away by Cecily's excitement, York had forgotten her.

He went scarlet.

"Madam, you're indiscreet. What will Cecily think?"

"Ma petite Cécile will think nothing," said Lucelle, "she is too discreet. You cannot see a person without being there. She knows my presence here is as innocent as her own. Is it not so, *chérie*," said Lucelle, gaily.

"You will help to save your gallant countrywoman?" said Cecily. She was too wrought up with her mission to think of anything else, and welcomed any possible ally.

"Indeed, no. *Ma chérie*, I do not mix myself up with treason and heresy, and neither will the brave York, if he is well advised."

"But something ought to be done," stammered York.

"And what, *mon ami*? *La Pucelle* is in the dungeon of the castle. The drawbridge is up. How are you to get it down? Do you swim the ditch in your armour or do you bargain across the moat the price of treason for all men to hear? When you get inside, there are three guards to pass, there are three gates to open, there are three sentries inside and two outside the cell. The Duke of York and *sa chère amie* demand to see *La Pucelle* alone; comment? They emerge, *la chère amie* has lost three inches in height and gained two in width. No one recognises the change. They have only seen *La Pucelle* every day for six months! Then in the morning you come back for the brave *Cécile* and carry her off in your pocket, and the good Bedford makes you a Garter, and the Cardinal he gives you the hat, and *La Pucelle* turns you out of France, or will you marry her and be king?" and Lucelle laughed merrily.

"By God! She is right," said York, recovering his mental balance.

"Shame," cried Cecily fiercely. "Will you listen to this creature? Will you be as devoid of honour as she? Shame, shame on you!"

"But my dearest, you see how impossible it is to take her from the castle."

"From the castle, yes," said Cecily, "but she must come out. Get a picked body of knights, and pluck her

from the midst of the rabble as they bring her to the market-place and carry her off."

"And where?" said Lucelle coldly. "Jump through the portcullis and over the moat of the town? They will not shut the gates when they hear the commotion, nor will the Town Captain or Warwick notice a band of horsemen in the street armed at all points. Put up a notice calling for volunteers or send forth the town crier."

"What can we do?" said York in despair.

"Nothing, I assure you," said Lucelle, "but keep your head on your shoulders."

"She is right, Cecily, we can do nothing."

"You refuse to raise a finger at the bidding of a harlot, and call yourself a knight?" asked Cecily fiercely.

"I don't refuse, but I can do nothing."

"You can."

"I can't, I tell you."

"You won't; you are afraid."

"I tell you it's absurd, and I wouldn't if I could," York retorted hotly. "Why should I risk my head for a heretic witch?"

"Coward!" burst out Cecily. "Coward like all your cursed house, cowards and traitors every one."

"By all the saints!" roared York, "no man would say that to me and live. Coward yourself to do so, knowing you're safe."

"Would my father could have seen what you would be! He would never have tied me to you for all your money. If you will do nothing, I will never see you again. I will go into a convent or die rather."

"And good riddance, too. I never asked to marry you. What else could I expect from a self-seeking Nevile with a bastard mother."

Cecily struck him across the mouth with the back of

her hand, her ring cutting deep into his lip. Turning on her heel she stalked from the room. Lucelle slipped to the door in front of the furious Richard, and called the guard who were waiting outside.

"See this lady to the Cardinal's palace, and when she is safe inside return for me."

A very tall young man, who had come out with the Duke, bowed as he held open the door, through which, her head held very high, Cecily walked.

At heart, Lucelle was a good sort; she wished Cecily no harm, but was far too wise to allow so desirable and useful a friend as York to be sacrificed to a child's mad caprice. She let him walk up and down for some minutes kicking everything within reach.

"Calm yourself, chéri. She will have forgotten it by the morning," she said at last.

"I won't, though," growled York. "I never want to see the shrew again. Did you hear what she called me?"

"No, mon petit. Drink this cup of wine. You will feel better." She handed him a goblet of wine, touching it with her own lips.

"All Nevilles are alike," York continued to growl. "Domineering, self-seeking, and always must have their own way in everything, even if the world has to be turned upside down to gratify them."

"She is very young and very brave," said Lucelle. "One of the saddest things in this world as you will find out, mon brave, is to see a great ideal killed by cold fact. But I hear the guard returning; I must go, or what will people think of me, chéri," and she kissed his bleeding, angry lips, but they did not respond.

"Bonne nuit," she added gaily. "Pleasant dreams of dragons and maidens in distress. Don't be late fetching me to the market-place to-morrow."

CHAPTER VII

CHICOT THE JESTER SUMS UP

CHARLES VII held his court at Loches, and as usual on the ground floor: for this King was so nervous that he would never go upstairs lest the floor should break: nor would he ride over a wooden bridge.

They were very gay in the city since the Maid had relieved Orleans, and crowned this degenerate descendant of St. Louis.

La Hire,¹ the gallant captain of a hundred victories under Joan's banner, and Dunois the Bastard of Orleans, the heroic defender of that city, entered with the accomplished Duc d'Alençon.

They found Charles surrounded by La Tremoille, the Archbishop of Rheims, Tanneguy and a dozen velvet-clad aristocratic wastrels, almost as cowardly and worthless as their royal master. They were all laughing at the biting wit of the sad-faced Jester Chicot.

"My liege," said d'Alençon, "have you heard the news from Rouen? Those barbarous English are going to burn La Pucelle."

"Indeed," said the King lightly. "I am not surprised; they always were pigs. I expected it from the first, when she was rash enough to get herself captured. Bedford always said he would."

¹ La Hire was a captain of Free Lances and the hero of a hundred fights against the English. There are probably more pictures of him than any personage of the period. Every time you play cards and are dealt the knave of hearts you are looking at a portrait of La Hire.

"Is your Majesty going to do nothing for this Maid who saved France, and crowned you King in this city?" said Dunois. "We shall ever be disgraced, if we allow this thing and make no attempt to rescue the victor of a hundred fights."

"I cannot agree with you," said La Tremoille. "La Pucelle had her uses at first, but her rashness would have ruined our cause if I had not checked it on more than one occasion."

"She led us to victory, when others sheltering in courts had given up all hope," said Dunois.

"You know yourself," said Tanneguy, "that Orleans would have been lost if you had listened to her and her 'voices' and attacked the English from the north. Remember it was I who suggested that you should hoodwink her by bringing the convoy by the river."

"We did not know her then," said La Hire. "From that moment she has led us from victory to victory, and you would leave her to her fate. *Sacré nom de Dieu!*" and the rough captain spat on the floor.

"It is not her fault that we are not in Paris now," said Dunois, turning on La Tremoille.

"Indeed it is," he replied; "she wasted my best troops in mad assaults; but for that I could easily have taken the city. I tell you she was more bother than she was worth."

"La Tremoille is right," said the King; "she became a perfect pest with her eternal rashness. Her one idea was frontal attacks."

"At anyrate she saved your Majesty the bother of leading them," said Dunois with an ill-concealed sneer.

"His Majesty has never been known to flinch in the forefront of the battle," said one of his velvet gentlemen.

"Nor you either, Messieurs," said d'Alençon, "for you have never been there."

"What do you mean by that, my lord Duke?" said the King.

"That these gallant gentlemen, your Majesty, take good care to restrain your well-known rashness, and prevent you from exposing your sacred person to unnecessary dangers," said the Archbishop of Rheims hurriedly. He dare did not risk a quarrel between Charles and the only three real soldiers he had.

"Her rashness was often fatal," said La Tremoille.

"It won Patay, and saved you from lying wounded in the ditch all day to direct and encourage the assault on Paris. A little more rashness on the part of some others, and Paris would be ours to-day," said La Hire.

"What can I do?" said the King.

"Do? Call on all France, and carry Rouen as she did Rheims," said Dunois hotly.

"Impossible and absurd," said La Tremoille. "The barbarians would throw her head into the first sap we opened."

"Have we no prisoners?" said Dunois.

"What mean you?" asked the King.

"I mean we have Suffolk, his brother de la Pole, Talbot, Hungerford, Scales, and a host more. Send the head of one of these to Bloody Bedford, and tell him that if a hair of La Pucelle be touched, the others follow," said Dunois.

"He is right: that would bring Bedford to his senses," La Hire said.

"Dunois, one would think your father was a Turk or Tartar, and not a Prince of France," said the King, glad to revenge the covert insult by allusion to Dunois's illegitimacy. La Tremoille intervened, while d'Alençon put a restraining hand on the Bastard's arm.

"Such an idea is preposterous, not even the English

would do such a thing. These men are of noble blood and our honourable prisoners of war."

"And who took them? I ask you," said La Hire.

"Several very noble knights, who no doubt expected a large ransom for them: and God knows we need money more than La Pucelle," said Tanneguy.

The three soldiers gasped. They looked at this cowardly assassin, who had struck down the fearless Duke of Burgundy in cold blood.

"Canaille," muttered d'Alençon, and La Hire's and the Bastard's hands fell on their daggers.

"Do not quarrel, I pray," said the Archbishop of Rheims, "we have enemies enough outside. La Pucelle is in God's hands. Perhaps he is punishing her for lack of reverence to Holy Church and its princes. She often spoke to me with scant respect, and refused to be guided by us."

"And was your guidance of much practical advantage to the King in recovering his kingdom before La Pucelle arrived?" said Dunois. "And will your Holy Church do nothing to rescue the saviour of our country?"

"What can we do?" asked the Archbishop. "Has not the Holy Father sanctioned the trial, and is it not being investigated by French bishops, who may be traitors to their King but are in unison with Holy Church? We should wait to hear the evidence. For all we know, we may have been mistaken in her. She has served her purpose, and we have this boy from the Hill of Gecaudan, who speaks as well as Joan ever did, and is far more tractable. God's Will be done."

"The Devil's more like, if it's the English who do it," said La Hire.

A messenger entered covered with mud.

"La Pucelle is dead: those foul fiends burnt her in the market-place at Rouen."

La Hire drew his sword, broke it across his knee and threw it down at the feet of the King, who had jumped behind two of his gentlemen, green with fear, as soon as the blade was drawn. Seeing this cowardice, La Hire deliberately spat on the floor, turned his back on the King, and went out.

D'Alençon wept on the Bastard's shoulder as they followed La Hire out of the room.

"Bring cards and wine," said the King. "Mon Dieu! We want something to cheer us up. I always said the English were pigs and they are. May the Devil destroy them!"

But in his cowardly heart Charles rejoiced. How he hated that Maid for shaming his manhood: how he hated her for forcing him from his life of luxury and ease to follow his army; and above all how he hated her for exposing his soft body to possible danger.

"I am glad I'm a fool in this wise world," said Chicot. "A maid arrives in whom four French bishops declare they can find nothing but good. Under her banner of Christ, for the first time in a hundred years, the French Army is continually victorious. She retakes half France. She crowns my friend Charles, King. He is careless enough to let our cousins, Philip of Burgundy and John of Luxemburg, capture her. These noble Frenchmen sell her to her foreign enemies, the English. Cauchon, another holy and learned Frenchman, and the University of Paris, declare her a heretic. The Holy Father sends his Grand Inquisitor to try her with the assistance of four or five more French bishops and seventy clergy. The University of Paris, whose city she almost rescued from the alien yoke under which it is slowly starving to death, clamour for her life because she wears breeches on her not too shapely legs. This holy, learned, and patriotic crew

hand the Maid over to Brother Bedford to burn. This he does with the greatest pleasure¹ while her friends stand round in this city which she made safe for them, gazing at the crown she put on friend Charles's head, and do nothing. 'Pon my soul, I believe the only other fool in France is Brother Bedford, for he has got rid of an enemy he dared not face in open battle, and can lay the infamy of it quite fairly on France and Holy Church. By my faith! A topsy-turvy world, my masters. Eh, Charles?" Chicot's shrill laugh rang through the great hall, more horrible to hear than any shriek of agony from Rouen market-places, as two hot tears of shame splashed on his bauble.

¹As a matter of fact, they were in such a hurry to burn her that they failed to wait until a civil sentence was pronounced. So Joan was illegally put to death by the Church of Rome.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FAIR LAND OF FRANCE

RICHARD and Cecily both passed a wretched sleepless night. Now that it was too late, they both realised they were truly in love with each other. Now that he had for ever lost Cecily, Lucelle counted as nothing to him.

When Cecily saw her hand covered with blood, she wept. She believed her words and the blow had inflicted a wound which could never heal. At fifteen her life was quite finished. She had failed in her mission: she had betrayed the Pucelle by losing her temper: she had insulted and struck her husband. Henceforth, she was condemned to lead a lonely life: a wife without a husband, a Duchess without a house, the whole world would condemn and point the finger of scorn at her or, worse still, her inferiors would pity her. Death was preferable. She glanced at a dagger which lay on the table, and then at the window which overlooked the courtyard. Was not a quick death better than a long drawn out one? But that was deadly sin. She must not run away from her destiny. In after years she often looked back to this night, on which she had found and lost love, and wondered whether, had she known all that lay in store for her, she would have held back.

Before Warwick was up, York was waiting on him. He prayed for permission to go to the front at once. Warwick readily assented. He guessed the cause, and was not sorry that this young man should leave the town.

York's retinue were very sulky at missing the coming

spectacle, but a suggestion of delay was so badly received that no more was said: and York's little band left the Eastern Port of Rouen as the castle gates opened for the last act of the tragedy. Nor were the escort the only ones to be disappointed, for York had forgotten his appointment with the fair Lucelle.

The country matched York's thoughts. It was bare and desolate. The farther he went, the worse it became. At first there had been a few inhabitants in the villages. Half-starved children drove off any live stock they had at the approach of an armed band, but soon even this sign of civilisation and good government ceased. The country became a mass of tangled weeds, amongst which the travellers passed some blackened patches and a heap of stones, once a smiling village and a church.

Sometimes a cry would be heard, and a few forms would be seen scurrying away into the bush, but whether human or not it was hard to say.

Occasionally a band of armed men would be met, but the young Duke's party was too strong to offer any temptation.

Fifteen years of war had made it worse than useless to cultivate land, the fruits of which would certainly be taken by one side or the other, before they were half ripe.

When York reached the garrison to which he had been told off, he was appalled by the state of affairs. A lot of dreadful-looking females, scarcely human, were leaning over the walls, leering at his men. A lousy sentry shouted to him that they hadn't got enough to eat themselves, and that he and his troop had better take themselves elsewhere, and the sooner the better. When told who commanded the party he did stroll off to call the Captain, having however first given out that any such attempt would be utterly useless, for by this time in the afternoon

he would be far too drunk to know anybody or do anything: which statement proved perfectly correct.

So York had to wait outside, cold and hungry, till morning. When the captain, Richard Venables, was sufficiently sober to act, he went to the gate and asked if the party had brought any food, for if not it could go its way, as he would not feed any more mouths. He went on to inform York that he had been there sixteen years, and intended to remain another twelve: he did not require any assistance from the Duke of Bedford: and that, so far as he was concerned, Bedford and every other duke, earl, count or cardinal could know it and be damned to him. At the next stronghold Richard and his now hungry band received a better reception.

The commander of the castle, an Englishman, had quarrelled with the French captain of the town. A state of civil war existed and John Hagget was only too pleased to receive reinforcements, especially under such an exalted leader.

Hagget was little better than Venables. His troops consisted of a nondescript collection of murderers from half the countries of Western Europe, dirty, ill-disciplined and generally drunk; they had one virtue only, ferocious courage. They had lived on the country as long as there was anything to steal, but were now reduced to living on each other.

Richard, brought up under old Ralph Nevile, was horrified. They might be rough and savage on the border marches, but they were clean and well-disciplined.

With the assistance of York's men, Hagget made a sally against the town, part of which got burnt during the process. Seizing the French captain he hanged him to the nearest inn sign, and then gave York the choice of Town

or Castle. York chose the castle, from which he set about expelling all the dirt and vermin, human and other.

It was in such border garrisons that he was to learn his job.

Cecily was more unfortunate than Richard; for he could bury his sorrows in hard work, while she hid her broken heart behind a smile.

The policy of destroying the Maid was at first successful. It put heart into the English and discouraged the French, who could not help being disgusted at the behaviour of their King. The successes gained both by England and Burgundy were such that Bedford judged it safe to take the King to Paris for his coronation.

What a hollow farce it was! To their credit, the French nobility, even those in the English sphere of influence, had the decency to keep away. Only a few greedy ecclesiastics represented the nation. The streets of Paris were grass-grown, and the population had shrunk to a quarter of what it had been. Whole districts were deserted and ruinous. Food was almost unprocurable, for owing to the passing and repassing of armies round Paris, the fertile lands, which had formerly supplied the city, were a howling desert.

As the King rode into Paris, his attention was called to a window of the Palace of St. Pol; here he saw for the first and last time the face of his grandmother, Isobel of Bavaria. Bedford had rightly refused to allow her to visit Henry, or him to visit her, for she was one of the worst women in history. She had let her children go hungry while she feasted her lovers, and had for years deceived her doting imbecile of a husband. Even her eldest living son, Charles VII, doubted his parentage till assured of it by the Pucelle.

The coronation over, Henry, escorted by an army,

made progress through his fair kingdom of France, which his father and later his advisers had reduced to an abomination of desolation.

The Duke of York naturally had to attend the coronation, which took place in November. Here he renewed his friendship with Richard Nevile, now Earl of Salisbury, but avoided the subject of Cecily.

At home, the Cardinal and Gloucester waged their war before a Parliament which became more and more nigardly in voting supplies for France.

In 1432, just a year after the tragedy of Joan of Arc, Anne, Duchess of Bedford, died regretted by all, and politically a great loss; for she was the only solid link between England and Burgundy. Philip, her brother, having already arranged a separate truce for himself, was endeavouring to bring about peace between France and England, but his efforts were hopeless from the first. The French, very rightly, insisted on Henry's giving up the title of King of France, and Bedford equally properly asserted that as Regent, he had no power to surrender such an important possession during his King's minority. While these negotiations were going on Bedford, who had been devoted to his wife, and felt her loss terribly, fell to the wiles of Jacqueline (of St. Pol) a cousin of Charles VII. and of John of Luxemburg, Philip of Burgundy's captain. This marriage greatly offended Philip, since Jacqueline's father was his vassal.

It was during a conference between Bedford, Gloucester, and Cardinal Beaufort that York first met this lady and her future husband, Sir Richard Wodeville, or Wydevil, who five years before, it will be remembered, had almost caused a civil war in London by excluding Gloucester from the Tower. He had naturally not been allowed to remain Constable after the peace had been

patched up, and had returned to his master, Bedford, who held him in high esteem.

Jacqueline at eighteen was hardly the wife for a prematurely old man, being pretty, vivacious, and full of animal spirits: she had certainly been brought up in a most vicious court, and was from all accounts an arrant flirt.

In 1433 Bedford returned to England, taking with him the Duke of York, now at the age of 21 a member of the Council, and one of the Committee that examined the War Plan of the Duke of Gloucester. It can, therefore, be safely assumed that, during the preceding years, he had built up for himself a considerable reputation as a promising young officer, although, as there is at this time no mention of him in any of the French chronicles, he must have been in a subordinate position.

Soon after Bedford went to England a rising of peasants in November was provoked by the brigandage of Sir Richard Venables, who proceeded to lead out his gang and massacre the inhabitants of Vicques. York was sent to pacify Normandy. He arrested Venables and sent him to Rouen, where Bedford hanged him. Incensed with Venables and well aware that like conduct was in no way uncommon amongst these gentry, Bedford distributed arms to the peasants to protect themselves from outrages.

Unfortunately, the peasants, instead of waiting to be attacked, fell on several garrisons, so that a measure intended for their relief, ended in their being completely routed at St. Pierre-sur-Dives in August, 1434.

The wretched war dragged on its devastating course with varying success and unvarying misery to all concerned. Worn out in mind and body, John, Duke of Bedford, turned his face to the wall and died on 15th September, 1435. In him England lost not only a great

soldier, but an outstanding colonial statesman. Fully alive to the truth that government can only be by consent of the governed, he did his utmost to conciliate the Normans and French under his rule. The Burgundians and even the French chroniclers all speak of him in the highest terms. The Chronicle of Normandy calls him noble in birth and worth, liberal, feared and loved; while Bourgeois of Paris says he was unique in valour and virtue.

Before he died he saw all he had given his life to broken by the folly of others. He could not be in two places at once. As soon as his back was turned to England Gloucester and Beaufort were at each other's throats; and if he left France creatures like Venables undid in a week his work of years.

The one deep stain on his character was his allowing the French bishops to martyr Joan of Arc.

When Bedford's problems, difficulties, and temptations are considered, his moral excellence shines out in striking contrast to the general villainy of the times. Even Louis XI was stung to generous gesture when some of his nobles desired to destroy Bedford's tomb.

"What honour shall it be to break this monument and rake out of the earth the bones of one who in his lifetime neither my father nor yours with all their puissance were ever able to make fly one foot backwards? Wherefore, I say, first God save his soul and let his body rest in quiet, which when he was living would disquiet the proudest of us all; and as for his tomb, which I assure you is not so worthy as his acts deserve, I account it an honour to have him remaining in my dominions."

Philip of Burgundy, who seems to have been the only one with any sense, decided he had about as much as he could hold, and refused any longer to be England's catpaw.

On the dismissal of his father's murderers from Charles VII's court he made a separate peace with France at Arras, and sent a deputation to invite England to join in this treaty on honourable terms. His envoys were detained at Dover. Lord Cromwell, the Treasurer, drew Henry's attention to the fact that the dispatches they carried no longer addressed him as King of England and France. The fifteen year old king wept. Gloucester, on the contrary, insisted on a declaration of war against Burgundy, and, presumably in order to inflame feelings against Philip, incited the London mob to attack Flemish merchants and burn their homes.

The mantle of Bedford fell on York, though he was now only 23 years of age. He was appointed in May, 1435, Lieutenant General, and with Edmund Beaufort, Salisbury and Suffolk was ordered to take out 1200 spears with 5000 bowmen to France, though affairs there were absolutely hopeless. It had been hard enough to hold our own when Philip of Burgundy had been our ally, but now that war had been declared on him, it was only a matter of time till we should be entirely driven out.

After this, all interest in the war was lost. No noble took out reinforcements, or even went himself. After eighteen months of hard work and moderate success in holding his own against great odds, York asked to be relieved and allowed to go home to look after his own affairs. Since 1430 he had been less than six months in England. The old Earl of Warwick, who had succeeded the Duke of Exeter as the King's Governor, was induced to take the Command, and the unfortunate Henry was relieved from the stern discipline which was intended to make him a soldier and a statesman, but which only succeeded in turning him into a pedant and an advocate of peace at any price.

The Cecily York found when he returned to England was a very different person from the young imperious girl he had parted with seven years before at Rouen. He had left a child; he found a stately woman in the full flush of her youth and beauty, tall and handsome, with golden hair and a regal walk. Since the death of the dowager-queen, who had never taken much part in public life, owing to her disgraceful marriage with Owen Tudor, Cecily, as Duchess of York, had become the first lady in the realm, with the further advantages of being closely allied to all the most powerful families. Why she had not joined her husband, no one had the temerity to ask, though no doubt every one supplied an equally good and equally untrue reason. Salisbury was soon able to effect a reconciliation between Richard and Cecily.

York does not seem to have taken much part in public affairs after his return and reunion with his wife. He possessed vast estates that he had never seen, and which, in all probability, had been badly neglected during his long minority and absence; but in his short visits he certainly obtained the love and loyalty of his retainers, both in the Mortimer lands of the Marches, and in Yorkshire, which lasted him and his sons all their tempestuous lives.

The young Duke does not appear to have got on well with the Cardinal, neither did he associate himself with the mad policy of Gloucester with regard to peace with France.

It is known that serious disagreement had arisen between Edmund, 2nd Duke, the brother of John, 1st Duke, of Somerset, and the Duke of York over the fall of Paris in 1436, in which the Earl of Suffolk, the Cardinal's right-hand man, supported Edmund. This may account for York's exclusion from the Government.

The Cardinal, who was the greatest wool-exporter in England, realised that a peace with Burgundy would open doors to the East and South of Europe vital to the trade of both countries. In 1438 he went all out to accomplish this end. First he arranged a nine years' truce with his niece the Queen of Scotland, and then with the assistance of another niece, the half-Lancastrian Duchess of Burgundy,¹ he brought about a conference between England and France at Oye near Calais, which opened in January, 1439. It was delayed a few days only by the death of the stout old Earl of Warwick on April 13th. After extravagant terms had been put forward and withdrawn by both sides, a very good, and what might have proved a lasting, peace was agreed to, subject to Henry's approval.

The Cardinal and the Duchess of Burgundy breathed freely and congratulated each other on ending the Hundred Years War, for they knew how greatly Henry desired peace. The French ambassador departed quite satisfied. To the surprise of every one, back came the peace treaty with all the old demands reinserted. They had reckoned without the Duke of Gloucester, who, during the Cardinal's nine months absence, had regained his ascendancy over the King, and for ever destroyed any hope of an Anglo-French dominion. All the Cardinal could do was sign a three years truce with Philip for Flanders.

On the death of the old Earl of Warwick, York was again induced to take the Lieutenancy of France and Normandy.

The reason for this appointment is obvious. The Cardinal was getting old, and wished for the assistance of his nephews, John Somerset and Edmund Beaufort, in his everlasting war with Gloucester, whom he appeased by

¹ She was the daughter of John of Gaunt's daughter Philippa, the Queen of Portugal.

suggesting York for the highest employment in the gift of the crown, at the same time depriving his opponent of his most powerful ally. Gloucester, too stupid to see the cleverness of this move, heartily approved of it.

Before leaving France, Somerset and his brother Edmund had a great success in retaking Harfleur and defeating the French army sent to relieve it in July, 1440.

The war with France dragged on, Scales and Talbot doing most of the fighting; but the tide was definitely rising against England, and, though towns and castles were continually changing hands, the French on the whole gained ground.

Though the Duke of York was appointed in July, 1440, he did not finally get away till June, 1441, when he landed at Harfleur with a large force, including the Earls of Oxford and Ormond, Lords Bouchier and Clinton, and Sir Richard Wodeville.

CHAPTER IX

MISUNDERSTANDINGS

WHEN the Duke of York was appointed to France for the second time he had been living with his wife for over two years. Cecily had already a daughter, Ann, born at Fotheringay on 11th August, 1439. Their marriage had reached that dangerous stage where the first rapture has worn off and solid affection has not yet replaced it. Both were young and expected too much. Up till now York had had time to be the ardent lover of his wife, and then the doting father of a fascinating baby, but during the months following his appointment he had been too busy to be much with Cecily.

In the Fifteenth Century the preliminaries were many before a general could take over a new command. A bargain had to be made. For how much would the commander maintain a given number of lances and bows, or how many men would he provide for so much? The bargain struck, cash had to be obtained, generally a difficult matter. King Henry always gave away what was in the Treasury, and often money which wasn't. He was at this time very busy wasting on his pet schemes enough to keep at least 10,000 lances in the field, and provide artillery capable of destroying quite a lot of French towns and monasteries. No one could understand the mentality of a King who, when he had a perfectly good war on, and an excellent chance of plundering some rich and still undevastated districts, could devote his time and energy, let alone the useful money it cost, to founding

Eton and King's Colleges, and building elaborate chapels for them. Such waste was really shocking to soldiers, and to York more than annoying, for he had to make good this waste out of his own pocket.

In spite of Henry's irritating vacillation and unkingly character, York could not help liking him. There was something so frank and open about him when one had got over his mincing, old-maidish mannerisms. It was impossible not to realise that behind all these sanctimonious habits and effeminate ways there was real goodness, and that obstinate courage which leads martyrs to the fire for the sake of a word. All the same, he was a maddening man to work with.

When, at long last, York had overcome Henry's innumerable objections, he had to go to his various estates to collect money of his own to pay the men he was concentrating at Portsmouth. He had already learnt that a well-paid, well-fed man was worth three half-starved scalliwags who spent much of their time foraging, and more of it half drunk; and that, as the soldiers had to find their own food, it was impossible to keep discipline unless they were regularly paid.

Cecily, wishing to be near her husband, left their comfortable castle of Fotheringay and, in order to be but a day's journey from London where plague was raging, came to Hatfield, then a bare barrack, fortified to protect the North Road. She found it very dull and depressing there, and asked herself every day why York could not return to her more often. Had he ceased to love her? She was sure he had. When he did come it was not always to find peace. The infernal pride of the Nevilles prevented her from showing her love and joy at his return. Instead, she would be cold and haughty, putting him through a cross-examination of what he had been

doing and how he spent each hour, an attitude apt to be very annoying to a tired and overworked man. He quite failed to appreciate that it arose from love, and interest in his smallest doings; so he attributed it to suspicion and jealousy.

Being in this mood Cecily was totally unable to understand Richard's reason for hanging about in England when she was all eagerness to set out for France, where she would be Queen in all but name. How keenly, in those dreary winter days at Hatfield, did she look forward to a glorious summer in Rouen or Paris, which she had not revisited since the forced rejoicings at the time of Henry's coronation.

Richard had been occupied first at Wigmore on the Welsh border, then attending Parliament which was sitting at Reading. This entailed the most work, as he had to be so often at the Tower looking after munitions.

A visit to the city of York, arranged for February, gave him welcome excuse of a return to Hatfield. He arrived late one evening, intending to break his journey North and enjoy a day or two in quiet, for he needed a rest. He was worried and nervy, and had come from one of many long interviews with the King, who could talk of nothing but architecture and refer him on all questions of war to the Treasury, who, in turn, refused to act without Henry's orders.

When he entered the bare comfortless hall he found Cecily sitting over the fire, white and pinched. She had not been well for some time, and the cold foggy weather did not agree with her. She belonged to the windy dales and fells of Yorkshire; the damp swamps and woods of Hatfield depressed her.

"How white and ill you look, my love," said York,

throwing himself wearily on a chair. "I hope you're all right."

Cecily took this to mean she was looking ugly. It was the first time he had ever returned and not kissed her. She said nothing, but was deeply hurt.

"What have you been doing with yourself?" she asked. "I have not seen or heard of you for months."

"I was here three weeks ago; perhaps you've forgotten."

"Possibly," said Cecily sharply. She did not like her husband's tone. "What have been doing in these three weeks?"

"What haven't I?" replied York heavily. "First there was the Mutiny Bill. You would have thought it as plain as a pikestaff that it is better to have a law to keep order in the army instead of each captain's relying on his strong right arm: but no! every pot-bellied burgess had something to say about it. You never heard such nonsense. You would have thought I wanted to conscript the lot of them. I managed to keep my temper and pour sweetness and honey over their greasy heads and get my bill through."

"I had just started for here when Hungerford sent post haste after me, saying your dear uncle the Cardinal and Gloucester were at each other's throats and I must come back. There they were, like two gamecocks fighting about nothing."

"You always side with Gloucester and his odious so-called Duchess,"¹ said Cecily.

"Well, on this occasion I didn't," replied York good-temperedly. "At times, I think, Gloucester goes insane. They say Eleanor has bewitched him. He was raving like a lunatic and dragging me into it. Well, we managed to

¹ The Duke of Gloucester had first married the Duchess of Hainault on a very doubtful divorce and then Eleanor Cobham with no divorce from the Duchess.

silence him, and the Cardinal was so pleased he lent £7000 to the Treasury, so I may not have to pay everything out of my own pocket."

"That quarrel, according to your letter, took place ten days ago," said Cecily.

"The King would not let me go for fear of another outbreak. He is as frightened of Gloucester as a girl of a bull. I only managed to get from Reading to London last night."

"It does not take all day to reach here," said Cecily peevishly.

"I had to see Captain de Coix about some guns."

At the name of de Coix Cecily sat upright.

"Was his wife with him?" she asked sharply.

"His wife? His wife? How on earth should I know?" asked York, puzzled.

"Yes, the beautiful Lucelle. Don't pretend you have forgotten her."

As a matter of fact he had. For ten years he had never given her a thought, but Richard's mind flew back to that night at Rouen and he turned scarlet.

He was convicted on the spot. No evidence would ever convince Cecily that he had not spent the last three weeks with her old rival. She flared up and stormed at him. Nothing he could say would quiet her.

York's brain-fag did not tend to make him meek under his wife's torrent of unmerited recrimination. He rose to leave the room and collect his escort, saying if he could have no peace at home he would continue his journey.

"I hope you won't find the fair Lucelle in some other lover's arms, and please don't hurry back on my account, for I never wish to see you again," were the last words he heard as he slammed the door.

That night his son and heir was born.

Cecily was delighted at the arrival of a son, even though he had put in his appearance two months too soon. The child was named and took after the King his godfather, for, alas, the little Henry was an undersized sickly babe, whom none but his fond mother expected to live. She thought it the sweetest, dearest, loveliest man that had ever entered the world.

Manlike, Richard, when some weeks later he returned home, was unable to conceal his disappointment at the first sight of his son and heir, who was howling feebly.

"It's very small and thin, isn't it?" he said, as soon as he had kissed his wife.

"Is that all you have to say to us?" said Cecily, her face puckering in an effort to keep back the tears.

"Oh, it doesn't matter, my rose, as long as you are all right," he replied, lamely. "It really doesn't."

"If that's what you think, you aren't fit to be the father of the finest and best man there ever was. Go away! and I hope to God I never bear you another child, if that's what you think about it. I hate you! I hate you!"

York, who was led away by the nurse, while Cecily hid her face against her child, looked as though some one had poured cold water over him and then hit him on the head with the bucket.

"Her Grace, I fear, is beginning to realise the child is very delicate, and will be hard to rear," the nurse said gently.

"I had already been informed, but in less gentle terms. But what upset Her Grace? I only wanted her to realise I did not mind about the child as long as she was all right," stammered Richard.

"Yes, your Grace, you made that quite clear."

"Well! Why this outburst?"

"It is your not caring that has upset her Grace."

"Would she rather I raved and stormed, hit my head on the floor and abused her for giving me a puny heir?"

"Infinitely, for she would then have realised you cared as much as she does, and have forgiven you easily."

"What can I do now?" asked the puzzled man.

"Nothing, your Grace, for I fear the child won't live till morning," and the nurse left him wondering on the queer ways of women.

The Duchess made a slow recovery. She was dangerously ill after the baby died, and York had been compelled to neglect her. While all this was happening at Hatfield, Gloucester was carrying on with his policy of raising a popular outcry against the Cardinal and the peace party. The mob were always eager for war: they did not pay taxes. It meant better employment and more peace at home; for the warring barons could generally be induced to transfer their energies to France, and robbers, bandits and outlaws plied their trade more profitably and with greater safety under the name of soldiers.

It was essential that there should be peace at home, if France was to be held; and York found that with the Parliament sitting at Reading, and the Cardinal, who was largely financing the expedition, often at Winchester, it was impossible for him to be much at Hatfield, and on his rare visits his wife had clearly shown she did not want him.

Cecily refused to believe the reasons he had tried to give her for his absence, and her pride prevented her attempting any sort of reconciliation.

It was her firm belief that while she had been bearing his child, he had been living with his old mistress. He had killed her son by his cruel conduct to her, and then shown that he did not care. He had gone off without

seeing her the day of the child's death, and stopped away a month. He had not thought it worth the trouble even to invent a new excuse, alleging the old lie of a quarrel between the Duke and the Cardinal. Of course, he had gone back to Lucelle, whose vile husband was obviously a "mari complaisant." York had never loved her, and had completed the marriage solely because he dared not quarrel with her family. That was bad enough; but the utter humiliation! It made her burn all over with shame at the thought that for two years she had given this man all the love she was capable of. Now, having got tired of her, he had thrown off all pretence of loving her and cast her, a Nevile, aside for an old, very old, French harlot. Why! the creature must be nearly forty. It was more than she could bear or ever forgive.

As time went by her resentment grew. She would have been surprised indeed could she have been aware of what was going on in her husband's mind, of his thought that she by a silly fit of jealousy, brought on by a purely imaginary cause, had destroyed his son and heir and when he had tried to be nice about it, had turned on him, as if it were his fault. Since then, whenever he had seen her, she had been in a vile temper and vented it on him. Really, these Neviles were very hard to live with! If he left her alone, she would probably get over her disappointment, just as he had. Anyway, he was far too busy to give much thought to her and her silly temper, for he had a new and exciting mistress, who demanded every moment of his time and thought, rode at his side all day, sat at his elbow at meals, and slept with her head on his pillow, giving neither rest nor quiet, but driving him to the limit of his powers.

Her name was not Lucelle de Coix, but Great Responsibility.

CHAPTER X

A YORKSHIREMAN PAYS TOLL

CECILY allowed York to leave England without her; and not till her brother told her that every one would say she was afraid to go, was she induced to follow him.

At Calais, where she landed in July, a band of fifty horse archers met her. Their captain, John Blackburn, the younger son of a Yorkshire knight, like most of his neighbours, was pledged to the Neviles. He had been educated at the same time as the Duke of York, had gone out to France with him, and remained there ever since.

Cecily had brought a large retinue with her as befitting her rank and position, and several wains were required to transport them. There were squires, pages, footmen, cooks, falconers—every lady of rank had her own mews—ladies-in-waiting, nurses and maids. They made quite a large party as they set out on their journey to Rouen, through one of the ugliest tracts of country in Europe, made worse by having been ravaged and wasted time and again in the last twenty-five years.

Cecily rode with Blackburn. She hardly remembered him at Raby, but they soon dropped into easy familiarity, as people will who come from the same country, especially if they are Yorkshire.

The second day a dirty swaggering fellow on a wretched looking half-starved horse rode past the scouts, who preceded the main body by about 200 yards.

"You can't pass this way unless you pay dues," he said as he reached Blackburn.

"Is that so," replied he, in a Yorkshire drawl, "and may I ask why?"

"Because I keep this road free from bandits, and my men must be paid."

"Indeed," said Blackburn, "and on whose authority do you collect toll?"

"My own; and that's good enough, I can tell you, so if you want to go on, you had better pay up quick. I am Sir Marmaduke Lackland, you no doubt have heard of me."

"And if I don't?"

"You can find another way," replied this knightly scourge of bandits.

"And what do you require?" asked Blackburn.

"Seeing you are a large convoy, with a pack of women, I'll only charge you 100 gold écus and six sacks of flour. I like the look of your arrows, so add a dozen sheaves of them," he replied.

"We shall be delighted to give you them," said Blackburn. "Fetch some men to carry them, while I go and get what you want. Better to pay than fight if you have skirts with you and it is not your own money."

Seeing Cecily's angry look, the knight turned towards her.

"Aren't you sorry I didn't ask for you, my pretty pet? But I reckon you'd be more bother than pleasure."

Before she could even answer, Blackburn had turned her horse and was riding back to the convoy.

She was furious at the tame surrender.

"Do you allow me to be held up, robbed and insulted by every thief in the country without ever a word?" she demanded hotly. "Is that what my father taught you on the Marches?"

"Eh," he replied, "he taught us to avoid trouble the

best way we could. And what are a few arrows after all. We have plenty," turning to his men, "we can spare our old friend Sir Marmaduke Lackland a few arrows for keeping the road, can't we, lads?"

"Eh, that we can," was the reply, "and welcome."

"Well, get the corn and put it on the road. I've got the siller," said Blackburn. "Come behind this wagon, madam, if you please, while I count out the money. Best not let 'em see where we keep it," he said to her. "These foul pillagers are rough, and might insult you."

"From which you would not protect me, I presume," she answered bitterly. "I shall report your conduct to the Duke. No doubt a wagon is my best protection."

Blackburn had dismounted, and his men were all swarming round the backs of the wagons.

The bandit went down the road somewhat surprised at Blackburn's quiet acquiescence, and cursing himself for not having asked for more. Still, he could hold him up again before he got to Rouen.

Three hundred yards ahead about a hundred men, as proper blackguards as ever graced a gibbet, rose out of trenches on either side and came down the road. Blackburn's advance guard had fallen back to assist their fellows to get the flour. The bandits were about fifty yards off as the flour was carried into the middle of the road.

"Here's the flour," called Blackburn, "and here's the arrows."

Half the bandits dropped, pierced clean through by goose-feathered shafts, which came from every part of the convoy. The self-styled knight, with an arrow through both arms, turned and ran as the archers formed line.

"Wait a moment," called Blackburn, "you have forgotten the money. Here it is. Come and fetch it, Sir Knight. Don't ever say I didn't keep my word with you."

Escape from the best archers in the world was impossible. Few indeed reached their trenches. The leader had not gone a dozen yards before as many arrows were sticking out of his back.

"I misjudged you, sir," said Cecily, "I crave your pardon, but I like not your methods. They savour too much of treachery."

"Not so, madam," said Blackburn with a grin. "He asked for six sacks of flour, there they are, here in my hand is the money for the taking, and I think his men have over measure in the matter of arrows."

"But you gave them no warning," said Cecily, rather weakly.

"Madam, in this country you don't give wolves warning. You destroy them as best you can. It's the Duke's order. He's given out that he will not tolerate these free companies. They're to join a garrison or be exterminated like vermin."

The dreadful cries and imprecations, which had rent the air since the first volley, became louder.

"What are your men doing?" asked Cecily. "Surely they aren't killing the wounded."

"They are collecting their arrows. Come this way, madam; the road on that side is blocked, but we can get round behind here," said Blackburn, as he manœuvred her behind a couple of wagons.

Cecily suddenly remembered the wounded, and set her women to make preparation to receive them, telling Blackburn to bring them to her at once. In a few minutes he returned and informed her they were ready to go on with the journey.

"But where are the wounded?" she asked.

"I am glad to say there are none," said Blackburn solemnly.

"But I saw some run into the trench."

"They're still there, madam, but they are not wounded. Is it your pleasure we proceed?"

† Their eyes met, his were cold steel blue, and as hard. Cecily was the first to lower hers.

"Madam, this is France, not even the Border; and by Our Lady, we weren't over-gentle there."

Cecily mounted her horse without a word. She felt sick and dizzy, but held her head high and looked very straight in front of her as she rode between the guard of honour, which lay each side of the road as a sign that law and order under the Duke of York must be respected.

The Duchess remained silent during the rest of the journey. She could not understand herself. She ought to have been furious, but she wasn't. This common soldier had defied her. He had deliberately done what he knew was against her wishes, and had fooled her while he did it. Finally, he had out-faced her. She had had to lower her eyes, a thing no man or woman had ever forced her to do; all very curious. Perhaps the sudden shock of her first battle explained it all. She was no stranger to death or wounds, but had never seen men kill each other before.

By the evening she had recovered her poise and determined to reassert herself. She would tell Master Blackburn that she had been unwilling to reprimand him before his men, so had said nothing in the morning, but he must thoroughly understand that she would tolerate no such behaviour in the future. As to his barbarous conduct, she would have plenty to say about that.

Having fortified herself with a good rest and nice supper, she sent one of her pages to summon Blackburn to her presence. The rest of her attendants she dismissed. She waited some time running over the biting remarks

she had thought of, but as time went on, was less pleased with them than she had been.

The page, a pert youth, had found the Captain mending a wagon.

"Hi! You there, the Duchess wants you, so hurry those long shanks of yours."

"Are you speaking to me, you young whipper-snapper?" said the long Yorkshireman, stretching out an arm and catching the saucy page by the ear.

"Here, what do you think you're doing?" squeaked the indignant young gentleman.

"Teaching an ignorant pup manners," replied Blackburn, tweaking his ear a bit harder, and applying his toe, added: "You will call me 'Sir' while you ride with my company, and you can tell Her Grace I will wait on her as soon as I have made myself presentable."

"Then she will have to wait a damned long time," said the page, wriggling free, "and I'm not your messenger, nor do I envy the telling off you'll get. Shall I find a plaster for your sore head, when she's done with you? For she'll fair tear you to pieces."

When at last Blackburn presented himself, the Duchess had worked herself up into a great temper.

"Master Blackburn, you've kept me waiting twenty minutes."

"Did not your page inform you that I was working, and had to make myself presentable before attending your Grace?"

"No, he did not."

"I will correct him in the morning, then," replied Blackburn.

"My household requires none of your correction, let me tell you, Master Blackburn."

"If they are all as pert and remiss as that page, I

fear I can't agree with your Grace," replied the captain, with a stiff bow. "You sent for me."

All this time they had been looking straight at each other.

"Yes," said the Duchess, clearing her throat. "I sent for you." She paused.

"Why, please?" Never for an instant did he take his eyes off hers.

This was intolerable. This was insolence, an outrage. But still those cold blue eyes held hers. What could she say to them? She suddenly felt feeble, she wanted to strike him across the face, but she knew those eyes would not blink. She forgot all she had so carefully thought out.

"You sent for me, madam," came the quiet voice.

She knew she was blushing like a dairy wench. She could no longer meet that cold stare, so she looked down.

"Yes. I sent for you to tell you I wish to start out at ten to-morrow. That's all. You may retire," she stammered.

The eyes never moved from her face. She felt them.

"May I respectfully request that your Grace in future sends such messages to me. A captain of a convoy has much to do after it gets in, while others rest and refresh themselves. You have wasted nearly an hour of my none too long rest," said Blackburn, as bowing he at last released her.

For fully five minutes Cecily sat looking straight in front of her. What had happened? She had faced her father and mother and never felt like this.

She remembered the scolding she had got from the Cardinal that night in Rouen. That night in Rouen! It was this man who had taken her home after her humiliating experience, when York had let her down for

the sake of his mistress. That ought to have been a warning, and she should have insisted on going into a convent. This man would never let her down. How strong and tactful he had been. What a ready lie he had told the gate porter about her litter breaking down on her way back to the castle and her determination to walk.

He must have remembered her. For he had told the porter her name when he had demanded who asked admittance so late. Yet he had never given her the slightest inkling.

How tall he was, and such a charm of voice! Quiet but deep, with just that touch of accent which took her back to her beloved moors of Yorkshire. Then his merry jest with death that morning, and his actually counting the money into a bag; *that* was Yorkshire! Cecily found herself smiling. What was wrong with her? She had sent for an insolent and brutal servant to reprimand severely, had not been able to, but had been gently reprimanded by him instead. It was an outrage. "Collecting their arrows." A grim joke that; he knew what they were doing. She had been a fool to interfere. She found herself wanting to hear more, and had half a mind to send for him again; but this was nonsense, and must stop. Really, she was thinking like a girl of fourteen. If she let herself go on she would be turning the long-legged, red-haired lout—what nice wavy hair it was—into a fairy prince. If she went on she would be thinking next she was in love with him.

Cecily at this idea laughed right out, called her maids, and went to bed; but only to dream of a tall archer rescuing her from dragons and bandits.

CHAPTER XI

A GHOST FROM THE PAST

NEXT morning, in order in some way to restore her *amour propre*, the Duchess, in front of Blackburn, soundly rated the page for his impertinence and neglect of duty. She could not bring herself to look at her companion as they rode along all day side by side. She, however, asked him many questions about the ten years he had spent in France.

Most old soldiers like fighting their battles over again, and John Blackburn was no exception. What stories he had to tell of sieges and saps, of assaults and defences, of raids and convoys. A good talker, as most doers are when skilfully handled, he was seldom the hero of his own tale.

Only by a shrewd question, thrown out here and there, did she learn the part he had taken. "Oh, I was just beside him at the time." "I held the ladder." "He told me as I loosed his armour just before he died."

But as no man can hide his real personality in a book, lie he ever so well, far less can he in long recitations. During their journey, which took a week, for they often covered under ten miles a day, Cecily and the archer got to know each other pretty well.

Their growing intimacy was not lost on the rest of the party. The pert page was the first to put it into words.

"It will be unlucky if my lord's son and heir should have red hair," he remarked to one of the maids of honour. This young lady had cast a very favourable eye on the tall captain and did not like seeing him so monopolised by her mistress.

"Fie! Out upon you!" she said. "How can you say such things about your mistress. But if aught should befall the Duke, there might be another royal misalliance. Journeys seem dangerous things for us poor women."

One day, as they rode into a sunset of orange and green, Cecily asked Blackburn if he remembered the death of the Maid.

"Indeed I do, for I was on duty all that day and most of the night before," he replied.

"Do you remember the night before?" she asked, as he seemed disinclined to go on.

"Some things one prefers to forget, madam," he replied.

"What things?"

"Things which only four people know and which must be painful to one of them, whom I admire and . . ." He stopped abruptly.

"And?" Cecily asked softly, looking straight in his face. It was the soldier's turn to lower his eyes and turn red under his tan. By Our Lady! How handsome he was, with the sun turning his hair to flaming gold and his armour to blood.

"And?" she asked again.

"For whom I would give my life!" For an instant their eyes met.

"There is the castle we stop the night in. I will go and see that all is in readiness for your Highness." And he was gone from her side, nor did she see him again that day.

Cecily could not explain to herself the warm glow of pleasure his words gave her. He had spoken so simply and low, and then called her Highness, a title she had no right to.

A gulf between them indeed, even without that. A

younger son of a simple country knight, holding but one manor, as poor as a church mouse, and the high and puissant Cecily, Duchess of York, granddaughter of John of Gaunt, wife of the Governor of France, and after Gloucester, heir presumptive to the crowns of England and France. Yet, for all this, it was pleasant and a sop to her wounded pride to know that there was one man in whom she could still inspire such devotion, however humble he might be. A strange feeling of contentment stole over her. She had not felt so happy since little Henry had been born. At the thought of her babe she became sad again, but that was swept away by a gust of bitter resentment against the author of his being and death.

Next day they reached Rouen. York was not there to receive her, for he had hurried off to Pontoise to assist Talbot in its relief.

The old city of Rouen was gay as all towns are, where men return to rest from wars. The motto of England's soldiers has always been "Eat, Drink and be Merry for to-morrow we die."

Once released from the strain and discipline of war, it is easy to be gay, especially for the English, who are ever ready to crack a joke with Death and laugh in the face of that grim messmate, opposite whom they have been so long accustomed to sit. Nor do they find it hard to find female companions to help them, who are equally pleased to snatch an hour or so of happiness, and forget for the moment the pale spectre which ever dogs their men's footsteps.

Yes. Rouen was gay. The new Lieutenant, the Earl of Ormond, witty and reckless, Oxford handsome and dashing, jolly old Lord Bourchier, they were all there; with the fascinating Dick Wodeville, reputed the best-looking man in England, and now husband of Jacqueline

Duchess of Bedford, who had so livened up things during her eighteen months' reign in Rouen. Now they had another vice-reine coming to keep the ball a-rolling. Soon winter would be here, and that would bring all the soldiers back, unless the Duke of York sallied out from Pontoise and captured Paris. It was quite near, so they might hear of its fall any day. Living was perhaps expensive, and the poor dying of starvation in the streets, but soldiers were generous and spent freely. Yes; Rouen in the autumn of 1441 was very gay.

All July York was endeavouring to bring Charles to battle; backwards and forwards he chased him over the river Oise, but he could never get him to stand. At the end of the month he handed over the command of the army to that hard old dog of war, Lord Talbot, soon to be Earl of Shrewsbury.

The meeting between the Duke and Duchess on his return to Rouen was distinctly cold. They both felt they had a grievance and were both too proud to make the first advance. Their relations did not improve. The Duke was overwhelmed by work, for old Warwick had let things get very slack, and the absence of a real head for over a year had not made things any better. If Cecily could not be pleasant to him during his short hours of leisure, there were plenty of other people who would, as he was foolish enough to tell her. She replied she was delighted to hear it, and hoped he would avail himself of their company and leave her alone, which he naturally did.

The captain of the horse-archers who formed the Duke's and Duchess's guard was always about, and Cecily showed her liking for his company, since she saw it annoyed her husband. He was far too proud to show jealousy of a servant, but others remarked on it and made it a matter for gossip. Cecily thought a great deal

more of this archer than she should. She could not help comparing him with her husband. He was so much taller and better looking, besides being attentive to her smallest wants, which he always seemed to anticipate before she even uttered them. While York had been dancing attendance on Bedford, he had been in the thick of the battle. Hadn't he a dozen scars to her husband's one? Then he was clever; he didn't contradict and argue; he could understand and admit he was wrong; Richard never had the sense to do that; he was so obstinate.

So things went on from bad to worse.

Often the Duke had to go off for a day and a night. Cecily was now too proud to ask where he had been, and he was hurt at her indifference. Toward the middle of the first week in September, he sent a message that he was bringing Captain de Coix and his wife to supper on the following Saturday, and wished Cecily to be alone. This was too much for her.

Blackburn, by bad luck, was the messenger, and found the Duchess in the garden.

"This is too much," she said. "The woman has not only been his mistress for years, but he knows I know it. He's done this deliberately to humiliate me. I will not stand it."

"Madam, I am sure you're wrong," said Blackburn.

"I'm nothing of the sort, I tell you; I know," she said hotly. "I will not tolerate it."

"But, madam, I implore you," began Blackburn.

"Oh! I thought you were different. I thought you would have resented this insult to me. But you're all alike, just follow your own self-interest."

"Madam," said Blackburn, "that I will not stand. It is not true. I would lay down my life for you at any moment; you know I worship the ground you walk on."

"Do you mean that?" said the Duchess, suddenly turning very cold.

"I swear by all the saints in heaven it's true."

"Would you ride away with me to-night to seek our fortune in some distant land?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

"But, madam, do you realise what you're saying?" he gasped

"Yes, but if you're afraid, say so. I have no right to ask you to ruin your fortune for me. I only wished to know if you meant what you said."

"I do mean what I said, madam."

"There is no more 'madam' now. We are man and woman without rank and without honour," she said.

She found herself in his strong arms. His lips on hers in one long passionate kiss. She returned the kiss. How strong and gentle he was! How safe she felt in his arms!

"After this supper on Saturday, meet me at the postern gate with horses. We can arrange details on our ride to-morrow. Here is Lord Ormond coming. Good-day, my Lord, and which of my ladies are you pursuing?"

"On my honour, not one of them, for who would kiss a maid when he could look on so far lovelier a mistress?" returned the Irishman gallantly.

"Oh, Master Blackburn, tell the Duke I shall be there on Saturday," said Cecily. She was determined to play the game out to the bitter end as a Nevile should; she would not run away from the blow; she would receive it and then counter.

She and the Duke did not meet till just before the dinner. He was looking very tired and weary; the news from Pontoise was not good; there were countless little risings, little peculations, miscarriage of letters and everlasting lack of money.

"I hope you will take care of madam," he said. "I'm afraid I shall be talking guns. I am so busy I could not find another moment to see this fellow. He has a great secret he wants to talk over with me; he knows more about guns than any one living. He did not want to come to-night as he sees so little of her and had promised to take her out as it is her birthday. Funny, isn't it?" he added, with a bitter smile. "We used to feel like that—once."

The door opened and the guests were ushered in. Cecily steeled herself for the ordeal.

But who was this woman whom she saw curtseying before her? A little dried-up thing about forty, very ugly, with a face like a shrivelled apple.

While York and de Coix talked powder and bore and weight and swivel, Cecily tried to make conversation, but was relieved to find her voluble little guest was not only willing, but eager, to take charge.

Rouen was a nice town, but very expensive. Servants were hard to get. She had had a very good cook, but Lord Bouchier had bribed him away. Did the Duchess think that a nice thing for a nobleman to do? It was so hard to get fish, meat prices were going up; they always did, when the troops returned. The Court living there put up prices too, but cloth had been cheaper, since the war with Burgundy—much cheaper. Did the Duchess know Calais? Such a nice town, much pleasanter to live in than Rouen. There were so many sets in Rouen; a lot of the people who came from England were so stand-offish; in Calais if you belonged to the Staple you knew everybody; her father had been Treasurer of the Staple. If the war with Burgundy continued they would all be ruined; it was a silly war as it could only ruin both sides.

Had she been long in Rouen?

No, only about two years; they had been at Pontoise before. Her husband knew Rouen well, his first wife used to live there; she had been a very beautiful woman. Perhaps madam had heard of her?

Had she been in the town when La Pucelle had been burnt? Yes, she had died of plague on her way to the coronation in Paris. What? Yes, she had been dead nearly ten years now.

The room was going round. Cecily tried to think but thoughts would not come. Ten years! Ten years! Ten years! So York had never gone back to her. Ten years! Then she had not been in England when she had reviled him for deserting her for Lucelle. Ten years dead.

He had not lied. He had really forgotten her for ten years. It was not her husband who had killed her baby. She had killed his. As one vivid flash of lightning reveals every detail in landscape, so the words "ten years" revealed to Cecily the last six months. She saw how utterly wrong she had been, how forbearing her husband was, how patient and kind. She could have wept with shame. She could not leave him now. She could not injure him more.

"Are you unwell, madam?" asked the little woman. "I hope the word plague did not frighten you. It does some people. It might not have been plague."

"No. I am not frightened," said Cecily, smiling at the idea that a word could be thought capable of frightening a Nevile. "I was a little shocked. She was very popular then. I often met her at the bishop's."

"So I heard," said madam dryly.

How dinner proceeded Cecily hardly knew. At last the Duke rose and de Coix and his wife took their departure.

York was about to follow, but Cecily called him back.

There were no half-way houses with such a nature as hers.

"Can you ever forgive me?" she said. "Don't speak till I have finished. I thought you had gone back to Lucelle de Coix and had never loved me, and only married me for fear of my family. It was my fault our boy died, my vile, hateful jealous temper. I blamed you; and when you were kind to me, and tried not to show you knew it was my fault, I thought you didn't care, and hated you. I have been too utterly horrible to you ever since. I have done everything I could to hurt and humiliate you. I thought it was Lucelle you had asked here to-night to humble me and revenge yourself; and poor Lucelle has been dead ten years."

"Has she?" said York, taking his wife in his arms. "That's all right, my little Cis; we all make mistakes. Thank God! we have found out what's wrong." And he kissed her mouth, stopping any further conversation.

"Do you know," she said at last, as she lay in his arms, "I had intended to leave you for ever to-night. I must put off my escort."

"Oh, I'll send a message," he said lightly.

"No, I must see them myself. When men are ready to die for you, you can't throw them away like a glove," she said. "You do trust me, don't you?"

"Of course, my darling rose, I trust you utterly. Do as you think right. Now I must return to my hateful office. I won't say good-night." And he kissed her again.

How chivalrous he was, she thought. He had never asked who formed the escort.

Cecily sent for Blackburn, and to the scandal of her maids received him alone.

He came towards her, but she stopped him.

"I am not leaving my husband," she said. "I have discovered that he has never been unfaithful to me, and

that all these misunderstandings have been my vile fault. I don't know what you will think of me."

Blackburn's face went green under his tan; his whole frame shook as if with ague. He looked at her with those cold blue eyes which now seemed to blaze.

"Your Grace has been pleased to sport with me," he at last managed to get out between his clenched teeth. "I hope she has not been disappointed."

"Never, never," said Cecily. "I meant to leave to-night. I did love you, truly I did, but don't you see now how impossible it is. Do be kind to me. I'm so happy and so miserable."

"Farewell then, Cecily, my angel, my beloved. You are the only woman I have ever loved and ever can. Good-bye for ever."

"But you aren't going away?" she said. "Surely, surely, we can still be friends?"

"Never, Cecily. Her Grace the Duchess of York has never lain in an archer's arms, nor have his lips touched more than the tips of her gloved fingers."

He knelt before her and handed her a knot of faded ribbon.

"You dropped, or rather I stole, that ten years ago. I have worn it ever since pinned with this golden arrow, which, you may recall, I won at the Coronation Tournament in Paris."

"But why must you go?" she said.

"Madam, when you have looked through the half-open door of heaven and it closes, you know you're in hell. It is foolish to continue to look. It reminds you of the fact."

The ribbon fluttered to the floor and the Duchess was alone.

CHAPTER XII

EXIT THE TALL ARCHER

TOWARDS the end of September, the Duke and Duchess were supping alone, as was now their custom, when a page announced that Lord Talbot desired to see the Duke immediately.

"Lay another place and ask him to come up at once," said York. "This means bad news, I fear. The old dog would never have left the army otherwise."

Lord Talbot entered. He was tall and strongly built and he walked with a limp. Besides being short of half an ear, he showed several other scars on his weather-beaten face. No one would have had the slightest difficulty in picking him out of an army if told to find the man who looked like a savage old mastiff. Though he had got his nickname "good dog" from his crest, a Talbot, he certainly looked the part. With hardly a bow he blurted out:

"Those damned Frenchies have stormed Pontoise, your pardon, madam, and massacred half the garrison. Curse the spawn of hell. Nick Burdet's killed and I heard Clinton's a prisoner. What the hell he was doing to let such scum storm his walls, God only knows. Must have been asleep, ought to be hanged."

"How did this happen?" asked York. "It's a great loss. I thought it was only ten days ago you reinforced it. I sent you Blackburn with half my horse-archers."

"And by Satan and all his host I did. They ought to have held the place till doomsday."

"Do you know what happened to Master Blackburn?" asked Cecily.

"Oh, he'd dead all right. On the sixteenth they stormed the Church of St. Denis, and the next day made a grand assault—may they fry in purgatory for a thousand years. Blackburn's men held the north wall, but he was put in charge of those French levies whose captain said he was sick. I have always said those bloody scamps are more of a hurt than a help, devil take 'em! They tell me it was one of the Pucelle's peasant captains who led the assault after the noble and brave King had retired his sacred person to a safe distance. Hell roast him! The fellow had worked his men up with more of their rotten visions, I expect—may he burn for it, if ever I clap hands on him! They surged forward, shouting her battle cry, and our Frenchies ran away as soon as they heard it. They were on the wall before Blackburn could do anything. He held the turret, but his Frenchmen would not rally. Clinton called on him to come down or he'd be killed, but the fool wouldn't. Just put down his head and charged like a Nevile bull¹ and with as much sense, begging your pardon, madam, and that was the end of him." Talbot paused for breath and accepted the cup of wine.

"God rest his soul," said the Duke. "I wish I had not let him go. The best captain and the best archer I ever had. He saved my life more than once. But he was so insistent on getting away from Rouen, I thought he might have got in some trouble, poor fellow."

"Some silly bitch of a woman, I expect; God rot her," growled Talbot. "Ruin most men. If I'd my way, I'd clear out every one of 'em, by God's wounds, I would, fifty leagues. If her ladyship will pardon me."

¹ A Bull head is the Nevile crest.

"We were boys together at Raby. You will be sorry, Cecily; he escorted you from Calais, didn't he?" said York.

"Yes. I'm very sorry. I'll leave you now. Lord Talbot will speak more freely when I am gone," replied Cecily, as slowly she rose.

At midnight York found her on her knees in her little oratory. On the floor lay a crumpled, tear-soaked ribbon pierced by a gold arrow. She did not hear him enter.

"Poor child," he murmured under his breath. "So poor Jack Blackburn was the escort, and she thinks she sent him to his death. Poor, poor child." And he stole away to his own room.

PART II

A GAME OF CHESS

CHAPTER XIII

THE BISHOP'S GAMBIT

NO sooner had York left London for France in the spring of 1441, than the Cardinal opened his attack on Gloucester.

He chose an indirect method, seeking to injure him through his wife, Lady Eleanor Cobham. She was unpopular with the mob and Gloucester's war party were fast losing ground.

A priest of the name of Roger Bolingbroke was arrested, and accused of casting horoscopes for the Duchess of Gloucester with a view to finding out her chances of coming to the throne. He implicated Thomas Southwell, another priest attached to the Duke's household. Eleanor, scenting danger, fled to the sanctuary of Westminster, but this did not give her protection from the Church, and she was arraigned for heresy and witchcraft before the Council, which consisted of the Earls of Huntingdon, Stafford, Suffolk, and Northumberland, and Lords Fanhope and Hungerford. Bolingbroke, Southwell, and Margery Jourdain, the witch of the Eye,¹ were accused of high treason with Eleanor as an accessory. Eleanor was committed to Leeds Castle, whence she was brought before the Bishops of London, Lincoln, and Norwich on the 21st October. She denied any act of treason, but confessed to having had dealings with the Witch of the Eye, but only with the sole intention of making herself more attractive to her husband—cosmetics or love-potions?

¹ Not of Eye in Suffolk, but of a spot called "the Eye" in Westminster.

Either the Cardinal feared to go too far, or the King would not sanction the death of his aunt; so a compromise was arrived at. The Witch of the Eye was burnt at Smithfield on November 13th, 1441; Bolingbroke was executed a week later; Southwell saved his head by dying in gaol; while Eleanor was sentenced to life-long imprisonment and to do public penance. She was compelled to walk barefoot three times through the city of London, carrying a candle like any common prostitute, after which she was shut up first at Chester, then at Kenilworth, and finally in the Isle of Man. Gloucester stood by impotent, for being so close to the crown, he dared not move to help his wife.

It is probable the Cardinal did not credit him with so much sense, and had calculated that he would be goaded into some rash act which would ruin him utterly with the King. In January of the following year Parliament prepared a law granting peeresses the right to be tried for felony before their peers, which goes to prove that the proceedings against the Duchess were not popular with the nobility.

This Parliament was called to grant subsidies for the war in France but, like many of its successors, took care to receive something substantial in return. It proved generous to York, as it had every reason to be, for he was still owed £15,000 arrears for his last governorship of France. It voted 200 spears, 300 horse archers, 2000 foot and £13,000 to pay them, but to raise this money some of the crown jewels had to be sold.

Lord Talbot who was sent back to England to organise this force, was created Earl of Shropshire,¹ as a reward for his past services.

¹ For some reason he and his descendants to this day have always been called Earls of Shrewsbury, and no one has ever borne the title of Earl of Shropshire. (*Comes Salopiar.*)

These promised reinforcements made Normandy secure from open attack but did not prevent the town of Gallardon from being sold to the French for 11,000 saluts d'or by its garrison.

As York was now too strong in the north, Charles turned his attention to the south with considerable success. This campaign seriously affected the Cardinal's private trade, and he made an advance of £4000 worth of plate with the proviso that, if it was melted down, he was to be paid for the worth of the workmanship as well as the metal, and that this money was to be used for the relief of Bordeaux.

To strengthen further the position in Guienne, Gloucester proposed an alliance with the southern French nobles by a marriage between Henry and one of the three daughters of the Count of Armagnac. Hans, the Dutch portrait painter, to whom Henry wrote in his own handwriting a letter of instructions, went out to paint their portraits to enable the King to see which he liked best.

The presence of a victorious French army put the Count of Armagnac in a very delicate position; and in January the mission Gloucester had sent out to negotiate the alliances and marriage, came back having accomplished nothing. The winter had been severe and the French and suffered much. Etienne de Vignolles, the gallant La Hire, succumbed to the hardships of the campaign.

Quite other matrimonial intentions for the King were those of William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk. Suffolk's father and brother had died fighting for Henry V. and he himself had served many years in France. On one occasion he was taken prisoner and ransomed for a great sum, which had caused much adverse comment. People

questioned the fact that a new family could find with apparent ease such an amount to redeem a younger son.

No great military achievement had distinguished Suffolk's career, for he had spent most of his time on the staff or on diplomatic missions.

On his return to England in 1440, he clearly saw that Gloucester, though popular among the mob, was bound to come to grief sooner or later, and furthermore that for all his learning and accomplishments, he was a bad master to serve. On the other hand, the great riches of Cardinal Beaufort appealed to Suffolk; to say nothing of the fact that he was wise enough to know when to bend to a storm and when to stand up to it. The King was as devoted to him as he was terrified of Gloucester. The Cardinal headed a numerous clan, closely connected with all the greatest families of the land, while Gloucester stood alone, supported only by his rank and the fickle mob, which in his case proved most unusually faithful.

It was obvious, therefore, how he should act; besides, when Gloucester fell, York, with whom Suffolk had already quarrelled, would doubtless succeed him. Suffolk did not hesitate, he threw in his lot with the Cardinal and did all he could to ingratiate himself with the King.

The Cardinal was growing old and the reins were slipping from his fingers. With Somerset out of the way, to seize them would be easy. Beaufort's determination that Bordeaux should be saved at any cost provided a golden opportunity for Suffolk. If only the Beaufort brothers could be induced to take command, the Cardinal might die while they were out of the country, and, anyway, this policy would involve them in a violent quarrel with York. If they were defeated, so much the better; if victorious Suffolk could take the credit of inducing them to go out. Somerset showed no desire to undertake the

risk and leave the home front open, but was persuaded to accept the position by being raised to a Dukedom, while his brother, Edmund, was created Marquis of Dorset.

In the spring of 1443, Sir Philip Chetwynd was sent out with 500 archers to Bayonne. Somerset was appointed Captain General of Guienne, voted £13,600, of which the Cardinal found £10,000, and was given a force of 800 spears and 3400 bows and bills.

This appointment was clearly a violation of York's commission, and he naturally protested, sending over Shrewsbury and Sir John Stanlowe, the Treasurer of Normandy; the only concession they obtained was the trifling amount of £666 towards repayment of debt and the promise of £1300 whenever this sum could be recovered from some Norwich rioters. There is no record that a penny of it was ever received by the Duke of York, who was now owed £20,000. Suffolk wrote him a tactful letter, explaining that Somerset's attack on the French in the south, would materially strengthen his position in the north. York submitted, since he saw the force of the argument, which would have been sound had Somerset sailed for Bordeaux, but he did nothing of the kind.

After a long delay in England, during which time he had been drawing pay for his army, part of which some of the Council suggested was purely mythical, Somerset received a further quarter in advance and finally sailed in August, not for Bordeaux but for Cherbourg. Either ignoring or deliberately overlooking the fact that York had made peace with Brittany two years before, he marched down the border sacking a few small towns on the way. When forced to retire before Charles's army, he proceeded to ravage Anjou and Touraine. Except for a small skirmish at Pontoise, where he repulsed a night attack, Somerset arrived at Rouen in December

having accomplished nothing but harm to the English cause.

Crippled by want of men and money, all York could do was to threaten Dieppe.

Though the war was thus feebly prosecuted during the year 1443 in both the north and south of France, things were very different in England, where seven little wars, besides numerous riots, had taken place.

The war between Thomas Courtenay, Earl of Devon, and Lord Bonville was of importance since later it prevented these two magnates of the west from ever fighting on the same side.

There was fighting on the Welsh border where the Duke of York as Earl of March had a great influence, and was asked to exert it in the interests of peace.

Lord Grey de Ruthyn was fighting the town of Northampton.

The Church also, took a vigorous hand in the game. Sir John Nevile and the Abbot of Fountains were bound over to keep the peace. The Abbot of St. Bennet Holm and the people of Norwich were fighting hard and this cost the citizens £1500.

The Abbot of St. Mary's had a pitched battle with the people of York over the mill rights. The people of Knaresborough, Ripon, etc., were killing the servants of the Archbishop of York, who was at war with the Earl of Northumberland.

When these disputes were finally referred to the courts, the laity felt they did not get a fair deal as most of the judges were clerics.

Somerset, completely broken by his campaign, returned to England where he died on 27th May, 1444.

One of the chief causes of his failure was his love of secrecy. He is reported to have said that if he thought

his shirt knew his secrets he would burn it. The objective of his last campaign was kept so secret that the common people said he had never found it out himself, and certainly no one else has to this day.

As soon as the Armagnac negotiations broke down, the Duke of Orleans, who had been taken prisoner at Agincourt and was now living on parole with Suffolk, suggested that peace might be brought about by a marriage between Henry and some French princess. He mentioned the Queen of France's niece, Margarite d'Anjou, the daughter of King René, the Queen's brother, at this time chief adviser to Charles VII. He had a most imposing array of titles, King of Sicily, Naples, Majorca, Jerusalem and Aragon, Duke of Bar and Lorraine, Count of Maine, Anjou, Provence and several other regions, but he was, unfortunately, in undisputed possession of none of them.

As a matter of fact, King René had spent most of his life as a prisoner of the Duke of Burgundy. He had quixotically joined the Maid of Orleans against the English and Burgundians, and with her inflicted a serious defeat on them near Paris. Burgundy had hit back by supporting his cousin, the Count de Vaudemont, in his claim to the Duchy of Lorraine. René had been taken prisoner at Bulgneville by the Burgundian general, de Toulangeon, whom he had defeated near Paris. He had been compelled to promise his elder daughter, Yolande, to Ferry, de Vaudemont's eldest son, and to allow her to be brought up at his court.

The long imprisonment of René had a great bearing on Margarite's character. All her life she had seen her mother and widowed grandmother, the Duchess of Lorraine, indulging in personal rule, so that she was bound to have a very wrong idea of the real position of a

queen-consort of England and the powers properly belonging to that station.

As early as November, 1443, Suffolk went out on a secret mission to sound the French court on the subject. He brought back a glowing account of Margarite's personal charms. She was then fifteen, and reported to be the most beautiful and accomplished girl in Europe. She had spent several years in Naples, whence her father had just been forcibly ejected by his loving subjects.

The collapse of Somerset's campaign made a peace with France essential. Even Gloucester could arouse no enthusiasm for carrying on the war, though he could and did stir up plenty of resentment against the way the government had conducted it. In February, 1444, Suffolk, Adam de Moleyns, Lord Privy Seal, and Lord de Roos, were sent out by the King and the Cardinal to arrange a permanent peace, based on a marriage between Henry and Margarite d'Anjou.

On the 2nd May, Margarite was formally betrothed to Henry in the church of St. Martin at Tours, where the French court then was. On the 28th May, a truce was signed to last till the 24th April, 1446.

Suffolk returned to England by way of Rouen, having got very much the worst of the bargain; since the French had obtained the King of England for a princess who was not of the first rank, and a truce they required as badly as we did.

Henry was delighted, and made Suffolk a Marquis; at the same time creating John Holland, the young Earl of Huntingdon, Duke of Exeter, and the Earl of Stafford, Duke of Buckingham.

Suffolk's instructions were undoubtedly to make peace at any price, and he saw the price was going to be

very high indeed. He was in a most uncomfortable position and evidently afraid that he would have to bear the blame; so he took the unprecedented step of obtaining in advance from the King a free pardon for anything he might do in France to secure peace and this marriage.

An imposing retinue was got together to fetch the future queen into her new kingdom. The Marquis of Suffolk and his wife were at the head of it. The Countesses of Salisbury and Shrewsbury, five barons and their wives, seventeen knights, sixty-five squires and a hundred and seventy-four servants, were engaged at the King's expense for ninety-one days. Lady Suffolk received £9¹ a day and the servants 1s. This imposing party left London on the 28th October, crossed the Channel on the 5th November, and arrived at Nancy in the beginning of December.

The Duke of York for some unknown reason sent Mathew Gough to assist the Dauphin in an attack on the Swiss in Alsace. At this same time, he sent a letter suggesting that his infant son, Edward, should eventually marry the Dauphin's little daughter. Edward had been born in June, 1442.

Negotiations at Nancy did not go as merrily as wedding bells. The French opened their mouths wider and wider, well knowing that Suffolk would not dare to break off negotiations and return empty-handed to a disappointed King, a furious old Cardinal, and an exulting Gloucester. Before Charles would consent to the marriage, he extracted the once rich provinces of Maine and Anjou, won by so much English blood and treasure, in exchange for a barren title to the islands of Minorca and Majorca and the Kingdom of Aragon, none of which

¹ Nine pounds would represent considerably more than £90 of our money to-day.

territory had René ever possessed, or was every likely to be in a position to deliver.

The future queen of England brought nothing as a dowry, not even a decent trousseau. The expenses of the marriage tournaments and feasting at Nancy were all paid for by Suffolk, who was certainly as open-handed with his master's money as he was with his lands. He must have thanked his stars for that free pardon he had in his pocket, when he married Margarite as proxy for his King on the 1st March, 1445.

CHAPTER XIV

RED AND WHITE QUEEN

THE ancient city of Rouen had changed very little since the tragedy in the Market Place ten years before. It was now the capital of France, in so far as any town could be thus described in that wretchedly divided country.

The Dauphin (Louis XI.) had not yet arrived to complete with cruelty and treachery the unification of France which Joan d'Arc had begun with devotion and courage.

The negotiations for the marriage of the King and Margarite d'Anjou had been followed with the closest interest by the Yorks. Any children of Henry's would supersede York as heir to the throne, just as his Queen would displace Cecily from the position of first lady in the land which she had occupied for ten years. She had doubtless accepted the inevitable fact that the King would some day marry, though his delay in doing so had not been in accordance with custom. York could not, however, look with particular favour on his marriage to the daughter of a penniless hanger-on of the court of France.

York having been informed of Margarite's arrival in Paris on the 16th March, on her homeward journey, set out to meet her at Pontoise, where she was due to arrive on the eighteenth. He was entertained by her at a banquet, which according to the accounts, which still exist, cost £5 5s. 1d.

Margarite was far from well and complained of a

headache and the fatigue of the journey. She was no better next morning or the following day.

On the twenty-second, she was to make her state entry into Rouen. The streets were cleaned and the houses decorated. The notables had come in from all the distant parts, as well as the captains of the fortresses and border towns. The Staple of Calais had sent a large deputation to welcome her. On the twenty-first, Lady Suffolk came and told York it was definitely impossible for the Queen to undertake the fatigues of a state entry. This was exceedingly awkward, for the expense that York was being put to in entertaining all those who had come to welcome their new Queen was enormous, and it was highly dangerous, even though there was a truce, for so many captains to be absent from their posts at the same time. Shrewsbury was most emphatic on this point.

Lady Salisbury solved the difficulty. She was about the same height and build as the Queen, though a little older. No one in Rouen had ever seen either of them; why should she not dress up in the Queen's robes of state and deputise for her? Who would ever be the wiser, and even if they did find out afterwards, what would it matter?

York and Suffolk both agreed to this plan. Margarite was quietly conveyed in a closed horse-litter to the Archbishop's palace, where it was arranged she should stay while Lady Salisbury smiled and bowed to the cheering people, and received the addresses of welcome from the mayors and citizens of various towns.

Suffolk was very mysterious about the exact terms of the treaty, but kept assuring York that it was quite all right; that he had been able to make most excellent conditions, and that, although Margarite was bringing no dower, there were better and more important things

than mere money. When asked exactly what he meant, he became vague and generalised on good-will, co-operation, and the beauty of the Queen.

Cecily was very distressed about the bride's health. She visited her every day and found her hot and feverish. Lady Suffolk would not allow her to stop more than a few minutes, which Cecily regarded as an unwarranted liberty in one whom she regarded as so far below her in rank.

After a couple of days rest the Queen was well enough to attend a state banquet at the Palace. She sat between her host and hostess looking lovely. The black rings under her eyes accentuated their beauty, and a spot of vivid colour on each cheek showed up the whiteness of her clear skin. Lively and talkative, she spoke much of her future and what she was going to do.

During dinner, Cecily watched Queen Margarite carefully, but could not quite make the girl out. Though taking little wine and that with a lot of water added, she certainly seemed very excited.

"What do you think happened at Nancy?" she exclaimed. "Our French archers beat the English in a match got up by Lord Suffolk; wasn't it splendid? None of us expected it."

"I can quite believe that," said York, very dryly. "But hardly how such a thing could happen."

He turned to Suffolk, who had gone very red in the face.

"It was most unfortunate," he stammered.

"Most," said York. "I would rather have lost ten castles. The loss of prestige will have a very bad effect. Up to now, our superiority with the bow has been unchallenged."

"I don't believe it's possible," said Shrewsbury

bluntly. "There must have been some devilish trickery."

"Well, as a matter of fact, it was the Scottish archers of the Dauphin's Guard who composed most of the team," Suffolk said lamely.

"Oh, no, it wasn't," said Margarite, "they were real French and some of my father's men too. I won't let you take the credit from my country."

"As your Highness says," replied Suffolk, "there was, I believe, one of your father's men in the team."

"But how came it that our men could be beaten by a beggarly lot of Scottish knaves?" growled Shrewsbury. "They must all have been drunk."

"They had been the night before, I fear," said Suffolk. "The Dauphin had given a dinner and was very humorous about the way we fought. He declared that the French excelled us in every branch and that now they had captured so many of our yew bows, they could beat us even at shooting. I begged to differ, and laughing in that very unpleasant way of his he said it was fortunate I had no regular archers with me to test the matter. I could not stand that, so told him that although I had no regular archers, I could pick a team of any number to beat any French team at any time. He said, he would produce a hundred men next morning at ten o'clock."

"Apparently it was not only the archers were drunk," muttered the old war-dog Shrewsbury. "You were a fool."

"It was a trap. How could I gather a hundred bows, let alone bowmen? I had to get out every groom and cook, and for once the Dauphin had been generous in his entertainment. They had hardly got over it. We had no chance to shoot a single practice shot. At ten o'clock he marched his Scottish archers down to the butts with the

pick of the French and Alsatians. Even then they only just beat us."

The Queen laughed loudly.

"They beat you fairly, my countrymen did, and will again for all your excuses."

"Madam seems to have forgotten that she is now Queen of England," said Cecily in a freezing voice.

"You had several tournaments, I believe," said York, in order to change the subject.

"Yes, indeed. They were splendid. The Seneschal de Brézé was my champion, wore my daisy as his badge and compelled all he overthrew to wear it. The Count of St. Pol, whom I was once to have married, was his most difficult opponent. Do you know de Brézé? He is so handsome and strong, and has such a nice voice. He sang under my window, and vowed he wanted to be killed, as I was leaving France. The day I left he wept and swore he would always be my champion against all the horrid savages I was going to live amongst."

There was a stony silence, felt by even the Queen. She tittered nervously.

"I should not have said that, should I? But I am sure he meant it. It was rude of him."

"It will give me great pleasure to lick the puppy next time I meet him," said Shrewsbury. "I'll show him we're as good gentlemen as any perfumed chattering French popinjay, by St. George! Chew him up, I will, the rogue, and spit him out!"

"If all the Englishmen are like you, my lord," said the Queen with dignity, "I fear his description is not far wrong. Your conversation is displeasing to me."

She had heard her grandmother speak like this and was trying to imitate her. It was great fun.

Shrewsbury fortunately choked with rage. For him,

the most famous soldier in the world, to be talked to thus before the whole room by a child of sixteen, younger than his grandchildren, was too much.

By the time he had recovered his breath enough to speak, the whole table was laughing at the account the Queen was giving of the elopement of her sister Yolande with Ferry de Vaudemont.

She was explaining how Yolande and Ferry had fallen in love with each other and how her father had been forced to consent to this marriage, which was to unite the divided house of Lorraine. René, who could never forgive de Vaudemont his long years of imprisonment and humiliation, had endeavoured to break off the match as soon as he gained his liberty.

After one of the tournaments, there was a masque and much merry-making amongst the young people. As the fun got fast and furious some one suggested a run-away match. While Ferry's friends slipped off to get horses, Yolande was dressed up as a squire, one of the maids was put in her bed while she slipped down the back stairs into the courtyard, mingling with the guests as they left the castle.

A drunken groom stumbled against her and she gave him a push which completed his downfall. René, who was bidding his guests good-bye, saw a very small and slight squire, as it seemed, knock over a great hulking lout.

"God bless you, my lad, for a brave fellow," he cried admiringly. "May God prosper you in your next undertaking as he has in this."

Yolande had bowed and asked in a feigned voice if she had his permission to accompany the Count de Vaudemont to his castle.

"Why, of course, and spend the night with him there if you wish," René had replied.

It was at this they were all laughing when Shrewsbury regained his breath. The general merriment was infectious and must have helped him to recover his temper, for he did not interrupt his Queen as she went on to tell them how the eloping couple had ridden off to a neighbouring castle where they were married at midnight.

When René discovered in the morning that Yolande had fled, he went off in hot pursuit, but was too late; for he found the pair very happily tucked up in bed, from whence Yolande answered his angry reproaches, explaining how she came to be there with her permission and blessing. The Queen of France, who, fearing René might do violence to Ferry, had hurried after her brother as soon as she heard the news, arrived at this moment, and restored peace between the father and his new son-in-law.

A lull in the conversation at the close of this tale gave the party at the high table its opportunity to retire to a small withdrawing-room.

"It will be lovely going back to my dear father when he is at Le Mans," said the Queen as they went.

"Le Mans?" repeated York in surprise. "But that is one of your husband's towns."

"I know it is now in your hands," said the Queen. "But it belongs to us and I have promised my King that it shall be returned to my father."

"May I remind you that your only King is the King of England?" said York sharply. "And it is not for him to give away the conquests of his father."

"My lord Duke," said Margarite, resuming her grandmother's grand air, which sat very badly on so young a girl. "I do not like your tone. As Queen of England I shall do as I choose. I shall certainly insist on my father's

being no longer kept out of his birthright; besides this is part of the terms of peace."

"I advise you to try and do no such thing," said York quietly. "It would be quite useless; neither the council nor I, as Lieutenant of France, would consent to it for a moment. It would make you very unpopular in the country if it were known that you even favoured such an idea."

"I will ask your advice when I require it," she retorted.

"It will always be at your disposal, my very dear cousin and queen," replied York, smiling.

"You are insolent. How dare you speak to me like this?" said Margarite. She did not quite know what to do next. People had always quailed under her mother's slightest frown, let alone the old Duchess's, and here was a man answering her back and actually smiling at her, a Queen!

"You have called us barbarians once to-night, and perhaps we are," York said. "Our speech is more free than anything you have been used to hear. You are very young and have a lot to learn. England is not a petty duchy like Lorraine, or a puny kingdom like Naples, but a great and free country, governed by the King and his parliament. The less you mix yourself up in politics the better. Other Queens have tried to rule England. It has not worked, as they found to their hurt, just as you will if you are rash enough to try. It is not for the Queen to give orders for the disposal of the King of England's possessions."

This was too much. Margarite staggered to her feet. The room was going round. Her head throbbed as though it would burst, her knees were shaking, she was burning hot and dry, and her throat felt as if it was being closed

with boiling lead. Lady Suffolk caught her as she fell, and carried her to bed.

"Really, Richard," said Cecily. "You are too stupid. How could you have upset the Queen like that?"

"But, my dear, she was talking such utter nonsense, some one had to tell her and the sooner the better."

"Could you not see she was ill and in a fever, poor child," said Cecily.

"I thought she looked beautiful," said York; "such a high colour and so lively. What d'you think is the matter with her?" asked the bewildered man.

"Some fever she has picked up in Paris," Cecily said, turning to Suffolk. "No one but a fool would have taken her there. Let us pray it's not the plague." And all present crossed themselves.

Next day Marguerite was in a high fever; arrangements were made to transport her by boat down the river to Havre, where the royal party did not arrive until the 8th April, and were delayed nearly another week before she was well enough to attempt the crossing.

Suffolk resented Cecily's reproof, and both he and his wife saw in the incident following the banquet a golden opportunity at this early stage to estrange the Queen from her most important subject and his own chief rival amongst the great peers.

The sea proved very stormy and the poor little Queen was shockingly ill all the way.

Southampton was gaily decorated with flags and carpets. The King had come down with his new carriages to meet his bride. The nobles from the countryside, the mayors and corporations from the neighbouring boroughs, the bishops, deans and their chapters from Winchester, Salisbury and Chichester, the abbots and abbesses from Beaulieu, Boxgrove, Romsey and other

nearby houses, collected at the harbour to welcome their Queen. Behind them were wild-looking swineherds and red-eyed charcoal burners from the New Forest and the Forest of Beer, lusty shipwrights and hardy fishermen from Southampton, Portsea and Emsworth, weather-beaten shepherds and tall yeomen from the cold chalk downs.

As the royal barge came alongside the quay, the assembled people saw their new Queen carried in the strong arms of Lord Suffolk, while her husband and their King stood behind like some page.

As Suffolk with the Queen in his arms set foot on English soil, the clouds, which all the morning had been banking up in the west, descended in a deluge.

The cheers of the astonished people were drowned by peal after peal of thunder while forked lightning split the sky. The very heavens seemed to weep as though they foresaw the dissensions, trouble and misery, which were to befall this unhappy Queen and her new country.

CHAPTER XV

THE RED KING CASTLES ON THE QUEEN'S SIDE

AS soon as the King's doctors saw the Queen, they pronounced her to be suffering from smallpox¹ and hurried her off to hospital at Southwick Priory. Henry, too nervous to visit her there, sent a messenger every day to inquire how she was getting on.

The people of England, although not at all pleased that their King should marry such a humble and penniless princess, were prepared to make the best of her, give her a fair chance and take her to their hearts if she played her part. Even the Duke of Gloucester, who had opposed the marriage from the beginning, came down to pay his respects.

After a fortnight in hospital, Margarite was considered well enough to be married. She had already learnt that Henry was not as rich as she had thought. Suffolk's lavish expenditure at Nancy had emptied his purse, and some of her plate had been pawned with Lady Somerset to pay the cost of her journey.

Henry was in an even worse predicament. He had to borrow money from his uncle, the Cardinal, to buy horses and carriages and to furnish one or two of his castles for his bride. Even the ring, with which he was about to wed his wife was the Cardinal's coronation gift reset. For ten years the bill for resetting remained unpaid. All the Crown jewels were pledged, and even the collar of the Garter was lent out of pawn for occasions by his uncle.

On the twenty-third, a cold windy April day, Margarite

¹ Probably measles.

prepared for her wedding. So deficient was her trousseau that Thomas Chamberlain had been sent down from London to make her a wedding dress. She had naturally expected that Titchfield Abbey where she was to be married would compare with Tours, where she had been affianced, or Nancy where she had been wed by proxy. As she set out from Southwick Priory it began to rain. One of the horses was lame and added to the discomfort of the litter in which she rode. It plunged and tossed along the muddy tracks of the New Forest, the ill-trained horses stumbling over the ruts and roots, reminding the unhappy girl of that awful crossing to England, when she lay in the hold of the ship praying for death.

At last she heard a merry peal of bells, and looked out on one side to see the dripping forest, on the other a flint wall at the end of which was a gateway through which the escort turned. Then came into sight a small three-storied building of white stone with a handsome turreted gateway beyond which Margarite saw a small church. The whole setting was a shock to her. Could this be Titchfield Abbey where she was to be married to the King of England?

Her mind flew back to her proxy marriage. Where were any to match the King of France, her father, St. Pol, the Dukes of Brittany, Burgundy, Ferry of Vaudemont, de Brézé, with the other nobles of France. Here but a handful of very shabby looking gentlemen, and a crowd of fishermen from the villages round, forest folk and some fat red-robed aldermen. Even the escort, who had brought her from France, had slunk home. Their ninety-one days' pay had been exhausted months before, and there were no prospects of any more to come.

But after all what did the church or the company matter? Margarite had known from her earliest child-

hood that her marriage would be an affair of state rather than heart, but that had not prevented her looking forward to this day, when she was to marry the most virtuous and learned prince in Christendom, whom she had been too ill to notice when she landed. All she had received then was an impression of a tall clean-shaven young man with a kind face.

By the altar, in a blaze of colour, sat the old Cardinal Beaufort, now in his eighty-first year. When she arrived at the altar rail she perceived a young man magnificently dressed in a surcoat of scarlet and gold, the colours of England, with the Garter below his knee. He was strikingly handsome with brown curly hair. Margarite shyly looked through her veil as she advanced, and her heart beat fast for joy. Beside this splendid youth, almost hiding behind him, stood another man of about the same age. He was nearly as tall, but narrow-chested and with a stoop. His hair was long and straight, and he was dressed in shabby dark-blue velvet, worn at the seams. His one decoration was the Garter, the collar of which seemed too heavy for his weak shoulders.

Margarite hardly glanced at this mean-looking person, as she took her place at the altar rails.

Not until half-way through the service, when the Bishop of Salisbury joined their hands, and she found the one she held was smaller than her own and softer, did she look at the man beside her. She could take no more heed of the ceremony; the Bishop's exhortation; the Cardinal's blessing; the triumphal procession down the nave; all these were as nothing to the knowledge that the fairy Prince in scarlet and gold was the Duke of Warwick, and the creature in shabby blue, with knock-kneed shanks and sandy hair was Henry of England.

These were her thoughts throughout the dank and

dreary ride from the Abbey to Portchester Castle, which Henry had chosen for his honeymoon. It still stands at the head of Portsmouth Harbour in the corner of a Roman fort of nine acres, enclosed by a flint and rubble wall. Behind rise the cold chalk Portsdown Hills. The keep of white stone some eighty feet high commands a view of the desolate mud flats stretching south-east and west as far as the eye can see.

As Margarite crossed under the two portcullises and over the three drawbridges, she must have been reminded of Loches where she had been incarcerated by King Charles for a short time, just in case René might play him false, when it was known that Henry was seeking her hand.

Once within the castle the prospects were more pleasing. In front was a new building, the ruins of which are still called Queen Margarite's chamber, and her arms impaled with those of England and France can be seen carved above the oriel window.

Sir John Assheton, the constable, assisted the Queen to alight from her litter and conducted her into the Great Hall.

During the marriage ceremony Henry had hardly looked at his bride, and had been prompted all through by the Duke of Warwick. Even now he hardly dared to take her hand.

At the banquet he was quite silent, he ate little and drank less. The Duke of Gloucester did his best to enliven the proceedings by a show of heartiness and a few coarse jokes, but the King seemed in terror of him and of what he might say next. Margarite decided she was right in the opinion she had formed, or rather Suffolk had formed for her, that Gloucester was a very nasty old man, and the sooner he was removed the better.

The Cardinal, on the other hand, talked to her with infinite tact of her home and her people, telling her how glad they were to have her as Queen, and how he hoped she would be happy amongst them. Margarite never forgot his kindness on this occasion.

At last the feast was over and the Queen was led away to be got ready for the marriage bed.

She was ceremoniously undressed by the ladies of rank who had attended the banquet. A cloak of satin was put over her, and she was led to the great tent-like structure surmounting the bed into which she was placed.

In another room, the King had been subjected to the same process and as soon as the Queen was bedded, preceded by his gentlemen, came to the other side, where he was relieved of his dressing-gown.

Henry had never so much as been attracted by a woman in his life; he was, in fact, terrified of them. A few bare shoulders in the ballroom of his palace had often caused him acute discomfort, and even the sight of men bathing covered him with confusion.

Deprived thus suddenly of his cloak before so many people, he dived through the curtain as quickly as he could.

The Lords and gentlemen withdrew with the candles and torches, expressing their good wishes for the happiness of the royal couple.

Henry, till this moment, had not realised that Margarite would be in the bed. He did not know what to do. He lay trembling so far on his side of the bed that he was almost falling out.

Margarite waited in the dark, equally ignorant of what was expected of her. As nothing happened, she at last spoke:

"Henry, don't you know I'm here?"

"Yes, of course, of course, let us pray."

"Pray? Pray?" she said, puzzled. "What for?"

"For God's blessing on our union."

"But the Cardinal gave us that in Church."

"Yes, so he did, so he did, but it never does any harm to pray," said Henry confusedly.

It was quite dark under the canopy, and Henry was beginning to recover his self-possession. After a few minutes silent prayer, he said:

"Marriage is a very solemn thing. I hope you will be happy."

"I am sure I shall be," she replied shyly. "Every one tells me you are so good and kind."

Another long silence; this was getting on Margarite's nerves. She was wanting to scream. She was sure this was all wrong, one of them must do something.

"Don't you like me?" she said at last. "Do you think me hideous?"

"Oh, no, I think you very beautiful, and I am sure I shall love you. I love all things that are beautiful and godly."

"Then, why don't you kiss me? Ferry was always trying to kiss Yolande."

Margarite moved towards her husband. He had a nice voice and seemed very gentle. The wind howled outside, and a log of wood turned over on the open hearth, bursting into bright flames. She stretched out her hand and touched him. At the same moment the wind blew the curtain aside, bringing her into view. To his horror he saw she was naked and realised he was too. Henry jumped away as if stung, and falling on to the floor got mixed up with the curtain, which came away from the pole, knocking over the table on which stood a flagon of wine. The sight of this lanky young man

struggling in the folds of a large curtain was too much for Margarite's strung-up nerves. Forgetting all else she sat up in the bed and laughed hysterically. Henry was deeply shocked, and when at last he disentangled himself and found his robe, he threw the ends of the curtain over her bare shoulders.

"Such levity on so solemn an occasion is very shocking. Let us pray for guidance."

He dropped on his knees and started to pray.

Margarite got down under the bedclothes, and listened for some time. Henry's voice was low and soothing, soon her nervous tension relaxed and she dropped off to sleep. Henry realised this after a while.

"Poor child," he thought, "she must be worn out with the excitement of the day. I must not wake her."

Wrapping himself up in the torn curtain, he sat on a stool by the fire, where his attendants found him stiff and cold next morning.

It was still raining when he met her at breakfast. She certainly was very beautiful, though he could hardly manage to look at her without embarrassment.

She told him about her journey, and he spoke of his School and College, and dilated on the beautiful chapels he was building. Neither of them alluded to the night before. By supper-time he even brought himself to take her hand and gently stroke it. When she rose to retire after supper, she put up her face to him, and he shyly touched her forehead with his lips.

When she had gone, he called the Duke of Warwick who had been his best man, and asked him to implore Lady Suffolk to see that Margarite wore some clothing, as he could not possibly sleep with her otherwise.

When the Duke returned, they sat talking for some time. Warwick was naturally anxious to know what had

happened the night before and why he had found his master in so strange a position and the room in such disorder.

"Do not speak of it," said Henry. "Forsooth, it was very terrible."

At last, with considerable difficulty, Warwick induced him to go to bed. He blushed like a girl and trembled from head to foot. He refused to allow his gentlemen to accompany him, and hesitated for some time at the door. Finally, wrapping his gown tightly round him, he crept into the room. To his inexpressible relief, Margarite was asleep.

When she woke the sun was shining brightly into the room. She was alone. Pulling aside the bed curtain, she saw Henry on his knees praying before a crucifix. When he rose, she called him:

"Won't you come back to bed," she said. "You must be cold."

"I am," said Henry, with great embarrassment.

"It's nice and warm here," she said.

He could think of no reason for refusing his wife's request, and was relieved to see she had on a silk shift.

Margarite felt she must make some advance to this strange young man, who seemed so frightened of her. She was not the least frightened of him now.

Once he was settled she sidled gently up to him.

"Why do you tremble so when I come near you?" she asked, and laid her head on his shoulder. "I won't bite you."

Emotion nearly choked him, but the feel of her warm young body next his was really rather pleasant. He put his arm round her and she snuggled up to him as she had done to her father. After she had lain there a few

moments, Henry almost recovered his composure. He actually bent down and stroked her hair.

"I've never known a woman before. I can't remember my mother," he said.

"Haven't you ever been kissed by a maiden?" she asked, looking up at him.

"No, on my honour as a King, never," he exclaimed.

"You can't say that again," she said, and slipping her arm round his neck, she kissed him full on the mouth.

He started back. Surely this must be very wicked, but could so young and innocent a girl be wicked? He had seen married women kiss their husbands, and they apparently had felt no shame.

What had come over him? He looked into her eyes. In them he was certain was some new light, or did they reflect something new in him? His arm tightened round her, he drew her to him. He had never felt so happy in his life.

"My sweet wife, I feel I really love you," he murmured as he kissed her.

Margarite felt a strange excitement too. Was this really the love she had heard so much of? She too felt strangely happy, as she lay in his arms and returned his kisses.

"Henry, how nice it is to be like this," she said. "I shall always love you. You are so gentle. I thought love was much rougher. Yolande, who is so strong, was quite exhausted on the morning after she had run away."

She gave him a passionate kiss which he returned as best he could, bending over her and looking into her eyes.

Steps were heard outside the door; Henry pushed her

away from h'im. Feeling hot all over, he covered her up as their attendants entered the room.

This day was the happiest in Henry's life. He was almost gay, and laughed once or twice. He was no longer afraid of his bride.

As they walked on the roof of the keep the sun was shining. It sparkled on the sea which at the time covered the mud flats.

In the afternoon they rode out towards Havant and back through the forest of Beer, rousing a few of the famous Hampshire hogs, but Margarite was not sufficiently recovered to want to hunt, much as she loved it.

That night Henry did not wait shivering outside his wife's door, but entered his bed with pleasure, and lay talking happily to Margarite till she fell asleep. In the morning he was still by her side, and did not go to his devotions until his attendant arrived.

CHAPTER XVI

A BAD MOVE

THE Duke of York, as has been seen, was quite ready to co-operate with the Dauphin, who for all his villainy had quite sound views on government, the foremost of these being that "the fewer brutal tyrants the better," in fact, one was enough.

York proposed that they should have a combined drive of the *Faulx Visaiges*, Free Companies, Free Lances and all other bandits, thieves and robbers, who were literally eating up the country.

The Hundred Years War had been a wonderful time for these gentry. Any cowardly blackguard, who preferred plunder to hard knocks, could always collect a band of fellow ruffians and raid little villages, and sometimes even surprise a small castle. Unfortified houses had long ceased to exist. When these gangs made themselves too great a pest, and a force collected to drive them out, nothing was easier for them than to slip over the border and offer their services to the other side. If the drive was at all extensive a garrison often received so many of these scoundrels that they found themselves strong enough to attack a town of some dimensions. Though both sides saw the evil of the system, neither, as opportunity arose, had the integrity to forego the advantages they derived from it. Only occasionally were these bandits unlucky enough to meet with a short shrift.

The truce caught them between two fires, and the Dauphin and York made full use of it. The greatest difficulty was to distinguish between loyal captains of small castles and robber chiefs, the difference between the two being so small; for often the same man was one one day and the other the next.

Evidence was not hard to obtain when they were caught, since they were always ready to swear away the life of any one more respectable or, if such existed, more disreputable, than themselves. The Dauphin solved any doubt by invariably giving the benefit of it to the hangman. York had a much less logical mind, for he required a certain amount of proof and allowed past service to be weighed against present villainies. Future services were all the Dauphin allowed to count. It was not easy now for the bandits to know which side of the border was least dangerous. On the north they were less likely to be hanged; on the south, less likely to be caught, owing to the inferior forces and tactics of the Dauphin, but if caught they were almost certain of a hanging. It was all very difficult.

Both York and Louis set to work with enthusiasm; the one from a love of order and good government, the other from a determination to deprive his nobles of such useful reinforcements as would otherwise be at their disposal when the time came for him to crush them at his father's death; for which event he prayed most devoutly every morning, and he looked forward to with so much eagerness that many people, including his father, believed he was endeavouring to hasten it, which made the cowardly and greedy Charles's meals a matter of great anxiety to him.

In the middle of this useful work, the Duke, whose commission had nearly expired, was recalled to London.

Things had not gone as well in England as they had in France.

Though Parliament, which had been called to vote the expenses of the Queen's journey and coronation (£5,500), had proved very tractable at first, they were becoming restive.

They had heard Suffolk's defence of the marriage, and accepted without question that it was initiated entirely by the King. The fact that the Cardinal had had nothing to do with it so pleased Gloucester, that he supported a vote of thanks to Suffolk, proposed by Burley, the Speaker.

In spite of all his efforts, Suffolk could not quash the rumour that Maine was to be surrendered. He wisely prorogued Parliament on the 4th June, 1445, before the arrival of the French embassy, headed by the Count de Vendome and des Ursins, Archbishop of Rheims. With this embassy came a secret agent, Bertram de Beauvau, with private letters to the Queen from Charles and her father. Though these no longer exist, some of the Queen's answers to them do, and they make it very clear that Charles demanded the full price of her elevation to a throne. The language she employed in her answers to their demands is almost servile.

"In this and all things I shall always be your humble and dutiful servant." "I shall forward your interest always in all things," are hardly proper expressions for a Queen-consort of England to use in addressing a foreign King with whom her husband's country is at war.

Henry received the French ambassadors three times. On the first occasion, the Cardinal and Gloucester were both present. Suffolk answered for the King, who hardly spoke a word, contenting himself by smiling and raising his hat at the mention of Charles's name. The question

of Maine was not referred to in public, but was obviously discussed in private. No terms of peace were concluded, and by the middle of August, the only thing settled was that the truce should be prolonged till the 1st November, 1446.

In order to please Margarite, Henry gave de Beauvau a personal letter to Charles pledging himself to deliver Maine on the 30th April, 1446, and to visit him in France before the November of that year. De Beauvau also took over the letters from the Queen.

Gloucester became suspicious that something very serious was being held back, and began to make trouble in London.

It must be remembered that for six months Margarite had been coached about England and the nobles of England solely by the Suffolks, and naturally saw everything through their eyes. Lady Suffolk was the daughter of Thomas Chaucer, son of Geoffrey the poet, and a very clever woman. She had been treated with the greatest contempt by Gloucester, whom she naturally hated.

The failure to carry out the marriage treaty of Nancy was rightly attributed to him, and it would be easy to make out to the peace-loving King that Gloucester wanted war for its own sake.

What Suffolk's attitude to York was at this time is uncertain. Henry was well acquainted with York. For several years after they had been dubbed Knights of the Bath at Leicester, York had been at court; and during his absence in France the King had regularly corresponded with him and held him in great trust and affection.

The death of the young Duke of Warwick in the summer of 1445, was probably one of the causes of York's recall to England in November of that year. Now that he had lost Warwick, the King no doubt wanted some one

to stand between him and his uncle, Gloucester, for the Cardinal was too old.

Suffolk was useless for this purpose, since Gloucester, contemptuous of his low origin, merely brushed him aside as if he were some clerk or a footman, and the King was too weak to intervene.

A new parliament had to be called to vote money both for the garrison in France and for the Queen's maintenance. The Duke of York alone, was now owed the gigantic sum of £38,000.

This parliament, meeting in London, would be under the sway of Gloucester, unless some great and popular figure were there to oppose him. The Yorks arrived in London in November and Parliament met on the 15th December, only to be adjourned till the 24th January, 1446.

Gloucester, believing the honour of England was safe with York on the spot, and the Cardinal away at his palace near Winchester in a dying state, ceased his agitation.

On reassembling Parliament was most tractable, and voted the Queen £6600 a year, confirming the King's grants to St. Thomas's Hospital, Eton and King's Colleges. In April it had to be adjourned, because the King of France was sending over a secret embassy to press heavily for the fulfilment of the treaty of Nancy. This time it consisted of Guillaume Cousinot and Jean Havant, two of Charles's personal household.

They demanded the fulfilment of the pledge Henry had given in the personal letter sent by the former embassy, namely, that Maine should be surrendered on the 30th April, 1446, and that he would come over and meet Charles in France before November.

Henry again promised to do his best. The ambassador

threatened to disclose the terms of the treaty and resume the war.

Suffolk sent Lord de Moleyns and Lord Dudley back with them to France in July to play for time, and succeeded in getting the truce extended till the 1st April, 1447.

The Frenchmen safely out of the country, Parliament reassembled. Their chief work was to tackle the York debt, and the Duke met them in a most handsome manner. He forewent altogether £12,000 and accepted the balance of £26,000 in treasury bonds, some of which were outstanding at his death.

The government then entered into negotiation with him to return to France as Lieutenant-General for another five years, and he began to raise a bodyguard to take out with him. He was now the father of two sons and three daughters, the youngest of whom had just been born at Fotheringay.

Whatever impression the Yorks had made on Margarite at first acquaintance, everything was now smooth; and the Queen stood godmother to the new arrival, who was called Margarite after her. This baby eventually became Duchess of Burgundy.

By July, Gloucester had obtained definite information that the government were in some way about to betray our interest in France, so he came to London and set himself vigorously to raise an agitation.

Suffolk knew he had power to upset the treaty, which must be laid before parliament. Taking advantage of the good terms York was on with the King and Queen, he decided to strike. He drew up articles of impeachment against Gloucester, accusing him of exceeding his powers while Protector, and increasing the sentences passed by the judges on certain fairly prominent persons for

breaches of the peace. Every one knew this leniency had probably been the result of bribery, which would not have been hard, as the judges' salaries were generally years behindhand and often they had not even received their robes. The very truth of the accusations would only have tended to increase Gloucester's popularity, since the people wished that the King would follow his example and give them peace and order even were he obliged to enforce it in a not too legal manner.

The only result of Suffolk's effort was to bring the London mob about his ears; giving Gloucester a splendid opportunity to vindicate himself and expose the weakness of his enemies.

Suffolk had now to face some unpleasant facts. While Gloucester lived, Maine and Anjou could not be surrendered. Without the assistance of Parliament, he was too strong to be struck down, and Parliament, even if it would, dared not from fear of the mob. The everlasting want of money made it imperative that London should not be deeply offended. York was not likely to take up arms against Gloucester, and were he to do so and succeed, he would become too powerful. Something had to be done, and done quickly.

This was the position of affairs in December, 1446.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GAME PROCEEDS

Bishop Checks Queen

THE Yorks had taken up their abode at a house called "the Neyte out by Pimlico." Cecily preferred this situation to the city, since it was much healthier for the children, yet near enough to enable York to be in constant attendance on the Court at Westminster.

The Cardinal had retired from public participation in the government for some years, though he was still active behind the scenes.

The King and Queen accompanied by several members of the Council were staying with him at Waltham during December, 1446. Suffolk and his immediate friends were anxious to get his advice about how to get rid of Gloucester, for they saw clearly that they would be ruined by the Queen if they did not surrender Maine, and by Gloucester if they did.

Beaufort received his guests with great pomp and ceremony, for though a money-grubber he was no miser; he lived in luxury, and spent lavishly.

The Queen was shown into a room he had had specially decorated for her, the walls of which were hung with Damascus cloth of gold, from Constantinople, where the last of the Roman emperors was waging a losing battle against the ever-advancing Turk.

The Cardinal and the Queen had taken a great fancy to each other. Her quick wit and knowledge of the world,

far above her years, pleased him, while his tactful flattery and great wisdom appealed to her.

"What lovely hangings," she exclaimed, as soon as she entered the room. "I have never seen anything so beautiful."

"I've only just managed to obtain them in time to adorn this room for your coming," the old man answered; "an Armenian brought them to Rome, whence they came to Wainstead,¹ a mercer, who does a great trade with the East; he is a pleasant, enterprising young fellow, who sells much of my wool for me. He gave them to me, and may heaven bless him for his charity."

"I wish he'd given them to me," she said. "They are much too good for a man."

The Cardinal looked uncomfortable. He hated parting with anything.

"I'm glad you like them so much," he said. "Shall we come to dinner?"

"I can't see how the hangings are of any use to you," she went on, refusing to change the subject. "Won't you sell them to Henry?"

Being already in possession of nearly all Henry's pawnable property, and knowing he never had any money, the idea did not at all appeal to him.

"I fear the King would not waste so much money; he keeps it all for his colleges," said the Cardinal, "and it would be wrong of me to divert it from God's service to my profit."

The Queen flushed and turned an angry back on him. It was unpleasant to be poor, though she was used to that; but it was humiliating to have a request refused. Beaufort was torn in two by his greed for money and his greed for power.

¹ Of East Cheap, member of the Mercer's Company and father of Jane Shore.

"As you like them, I will leave them to you in my will," he said, as a compromise.

"But I shan't get them for ever so long," she replied, still pouting.

"I fear you will," he answered, smiling, but was not greatly pleased when she smiled back at him and seemed quite delighted at the idea that they would soon be hers.

"I would give them to you now," he said, "if I were not afraid of offending the giver. He is no ordinary mercer, but a son of one of my father's tenants in Leicester.

II

Red Bishop in a White Castle

AFTER dinner four conspirators against Gloucester met in a small room leading out of the Damascus Gallery. Different as they were in type, they were, for the time being at least, united in a common purpose.

In a great chair in front of the fire sat the Cardinal, who, though old, bent and toothless, still showed indomitable strength in every line of his face and figure, and wore his scarlet robes with the utmost dignity.

Beside him was a gorgeously dressed man of about fifty. His face was coarse, his hands large and his clothes did not sit on him with the same ease as those of the man on the other side of the fire, who appeared the younger and who bore a strong likeness to the old man in the centre. In the corner dressed in black sat a fat-faced man with a happy smile, whose narrow eyes missed nothing. He rather resembled a very intelligent middle-white pig.

"There is only one thing you can do," said the Cardinal, "that is, to summon a parliament. Humphrey

is a very foolish man. He's certain to start an agitation, and it will be quite easy to raise a riot which you can make the excuse for parliament meeting in some other city than London. He's sure to give you some peg on which you can hang your accusation."

"He didn't when you attacked the Duchess," said Suffolk.

"True," replied the old man, "he found out that I wanted him to, and had at the time sufficient force at hand to crush him. He was always a bit afraid of me, which he is not of you."

"Why should he fear you more than me?"

"Because I'm his uncle and his equal. You're neither," was the reply. Then to change the subject, "How will the King take it, do you think?"

"Rather how will the Queen take it?" replied Suffolk. "I have all along been very careful to inform her of the Duke's real character, and she is naturally prejudiced against any powerful subject. She's seen too many of them in France. I'll answer for the fair Marguerite."

"Be careful of the King," said Edmond, Earl of Somerset, the Cardinal's nephew. "I know he's a weak boy, but he can be obstinate too, and he hates all idea of violence. He is terrified of his uncle, and if Gloucester came to him in one of his rages Henry would as likely as not do exactly what he was told, which would quite well be to have your head off, Suffolk. The Duke has threatened it more than once."

"In that case it would be better not to allow him to see the King," said the Cardinal. "Do you think he has any suspicion of what you have in mind?"

"No, I'm sure he hasn't," answered Edmond. "After the last fiasco, I heard him say that he feared Suffolk and all his powers less than the sorriest cur that had ever

barked at his heels; and if he had been in better health, he'd have used a whip to deal with him."

Suffolk coloured with rage.

"He'll repent those words before he's much older, curse him."

"I don't suppose it would be safe to execute him in London," said Somerset.

"Certainly not," said the Cardinal; "but whatever you do you must do quickly. I shouldn't be at all surprised if he didn't save you the trouble. Gilbert Kymer, his learned physician, tells me his heart is in a very bad state and that he is liable to drop down dead any day. A sudden shock would be most dangerous."

"A misfortune of that sort would certainly save an infinity of trouble," remarked Adam de Moleyns, the saintly Bishop of Chichester, and Lord High Treasurer. "May God's will be done."

"Do you think Coventry would be a good place for Parliament to meet?" asked Suffolk, ignoring the Bishop's pious wish.

"Too near the centre of his properties," said Edmond.

"Leicester, then," suggested Suffolk.

"Certainly not," said the Cardinal; "the people would never allow you to touch a hair of the head of a grandson of my father, the great Duke. They worship his memory. No, you had better not hold it so far north as to come into the sphere of the Neviles and Percys, one of whom would certainly take his side just to enrage the other."

"What about the eastern counties?" said Edmond. "You are strong there, aren't you, Suffolk?"

"Yes. Why not Bury St. Edmunds? It's right in the middle of my country, and hard enough to get to in winter, heaven knows! The fewer members who attend the better."

"Foolish as Humphrey is, I fear even he would smell a rat," the Cardinal put in. "Summon it to meet at Cambridge, which belongs to York. They are on good terms, I believe; the King will be delighted to see his college which is nearly finished and which they tell me is very beautiful, while the Queen will be glad to come, because she thinks of founding another. She was only talking about it last night at supper with Andrew Duket."

"I should prefer it at Bury," said Suffolk. "Beaumont is strong there and so are some of our other friends."

"At Christmas it would be easy to raise a riot in the City and put it down to the Duke, even if he had no hand in it," said the Bishop. "The people make this feast of Holy Church an excuse for much drunkenness, I fear."

"What good would that do?" asked Suffolk.

"It could be made a reason to transfer the meeting from Cambridge to Bury without arousing the Duke's suspicion, and would show how much you feared him," replied the Bishop. "Give him to understand you don't want him to attend. He'll come quick enough then."

"What do you propose to do with his great wealth?" asked the Cardinal, a greedy light coming into his faded old eyes.

"I presume the King would dispose of it as he thinks fit," said Suffolk stiffly.

"If that means you are going to get the lot, I'll have nothing to do with this matter," said Edmond. "It's Lancastrian property and belongs to us."

"It certainly should be shared evenly amongst those who bring about so desirable an end," said the Bishop. "The labourer is worthy of his hire."

"In that case I expect you'll find the Queen will want quite a big share. That little lady is very fond of money, like all paupers," said Suffolk.

"Don't quarrel over the lion's skin until you've got it," said the Cardinal.

"Perhaps the thought of all the good he can do with the Duke's money might help to steel the King's heart, if it were put to him in the right manner," said the Bishop.

"On whom can you rely?" the Cardinal asked Suffolk.

"On all the old council; they fear him for the part they took against the Duchess."

"What about York?"

"I'm not sure about him. He and the Duke have never quarrelled as far as I know, and York is almost too rich to want more money. Look how he threw £12,000 to the Commons as if it were an old cloak! I should be afraid to suggest it to him. He does not yet know about Maine and Anjou. When he spoke to me he was very hotly against any idea of restoring them."

"Then leave him out of it till you have the Duke in safe keeping. If it comes to a trial, which I pray God it won't, he must be High Steward; and an impartial judge is a good thing sometimes," said the Cardinal, with a sigh; "especially when the jury know the accused is guilty—as they will in this case."

"With Gloucester out of the way," said Somerset, "our strength will be doubled and York's halved. I don't see why I shouldn't go to France instead of him. He won't dare to plot at home after he has seen that we can break even Gloucester."

"The Commission is practically settled," said Suffolk, who had no wish to offend so powerful a prince as York, or, for that matter, have him at home.

Next day Suffolk and de Moleyns went off to see the Queen, whom they found discussing the founding of a college with the King and Andrew Duket. It was to be

dedicated to St. Bernard.¹ Where the money was to come from was the difficulty as usual. Suffolk listened for some time, and then said:

"If the worthy prebendary will retire, I think I can suggest a means of finding enough money to make this college worthy of its founder."

"Sir," continued Suffolk, when Duket had withdrawn, "I have come to you on a most painful matter. It has come to my knowledge that a certain very highly placed personage is plotting against the state."

"Indeed, my lord," said the King. "I'm sure there is none whom I have injured. If there be, bring him to me and I will right any wrong I may have done him."

"I fear you cannot do that, sir, for it is your crown he wants."

"Who is it?" asked the Queen. "Tell me at once. Not the Duke of York, surely?"

"Not this time, but his Majesty's uncle, the Duke of Gloucester."

"Surely not," said the King. "Only lately he cleared himself of all charges brought against him."

"On that very account he is emboldened. He is well aware that he successfully deceived your Highness in that matter, and this, coupled with the feeling that he has the mob at his back, has incited him to fresh treason."

"Though he is very terrible in anger," said Henry, "I'm sure he'd do nothing to harm us. I've never done him any hurt."

"Your Highness knows, that he alone stands in the way of peace with France and the fulfilling of your word to your royal uncle of France and the Queen's father.

¹ This college is now Queen's College and was finished by Elizabeth Woodville. The altar piece is thought by some to be the work of King René.

He'll never allow Anjou to be restored to its rightful owner. Ask him yourself."

"I daren't," said the King hastily. "I can't bear or withstand his wrath."

"Who is King?" demanded the Queen hotly. "Humphrey or Henry? Subjects who withstand their King must be put down. He must be taught a lesson. Have him arrested and brought to trial at once."

"He'd bring the mob down on us if we did," said Suffolk. "We must catch him far away from London."

"Do you fear the rabble?" retorted the Queen haughtily.

"No, madam, but his Highness hates civil war, and unless we are careful, that is what it will mean. His great wealth makes him very powerful. The idea of restoring Maine to your father is very unpopular."

"I'm sure he'd not do anything to wrong me," said the King. "He ruled so well when I was a boy."

"That's just it. Once having been all powerful, he can't bear to be no longer so."

"What do you propose to do?" the King said weakly. "I will not have Christian blood spilt."

"Nonsense," said the Queen. "You must be strong and refuse to allow this man to rule you."

"Does your Highness realise," said the Bishop, speaking for the first time, "that if Maine is not given back by April, the war with France will begin again and thousands of Christians will be killed. We have no money to carry on war, and cannot expect the Duke of York to do so at his own expense for ever."

"Oh, what ought I do? What ought I do?" the King cried. "It is all so difficult."

"Deprive the Duke of his wealth and you deprive him of his power," said Suffolk.

"I wish the Cardinal were here," said the King. "What does he say?"

"That it is your duty as a King and a Christian to give your country peace," answered the Bishop, without a moment's hesitation, "and spend in God's work this money which will otherwise be used for evil purposes."

"But what will he say to me if I tax him with treason?" said Henry, breaking into tears. "I really can't, I can't, I can't."

"You needn't see him," said Suffolk.

"That makes a lot of difference," said the King, wiping his eyes. "But are you sure?"

"Quite sure, if you will leave the matter with us," said Margarite, looking at her husband with contempt. She was not used to weeping men.

"Perhaps I'd better. It's very difficult. I must go and pray. I feel very ill and upset, but I will have no violence done. Forsooth, I will not," said the King, as he left the room.

"His Highness is too tender-hearted," said Suffolk, resuming his seat.

"Too weak-minded, you mean," said Margarite angrily. "What do you intend to do?"

"Can we rely on your Highness's support?"

"Of course, and the King's too, if you only keep the Duke away from him."

"We'll do that with your Highness's help," said the Bishop.

"Your jointure requires settling on better terms, and the idea is that we should summon parliament at Bury or some distant town in East Anglia, and have the Duke arrested as soon as he arrives. The King had better send two of his personal servants to meet him as he enters the town and excuse his attendance till next day. That will

not alarm him. When it's dark, the Lords of the Council can go as if they were waiting on him and arrest him."

"Why not arrest him as he enters the city?" asked the Queen.

"A force big enough would alarm him and he might escape," said Suffolk.

"Why do you want a parliament?"

"As a bait to draw him away from London, and to attaint him."

"Otherwise there would be no money for the King's godly works and your college," said the Bishop.

"And after you have arrested him?" asked the Queen doubtfully.

"We must trust in God," said the Bishop unctuously.

III

Knight Takes Castle

EVERYTHING went according to plan. Writs were issued on the 10th December for a parliament to meet at Cambridge on the 10th February. On Christmas day there was a riot in the city of London in favour of Gloucester. The venue of parliament was then altered to Bury St. Edmunds, where it duly met. William Tresham of Rothwell in Northamptonshire, a friend of the Duke of York's, was elected Speaker.

Very few members attended, owing to deep snow. So severe was the weather that the Duke of Gloucester took a whole week longer than he expected on his journey from the west and did not reach Bury till the 18th February. The intense cold caused the death of some of the soldiers who had been brought to guard all the roads,

ostensibly against the mob, but really to watch for Gloucester and prevent any chance of his escaping. The Hospital of St. Salvator, which stood in the North Spital on the side of the town farthest from London, had been got ready for the Duke's reception.

Sir John Stourton and Sir Thomas Stanley met him about four miles outside the town with the message that the King would excuse his waiting on him till next day, as his Highness was sure he would be tired from his journey in the biting cold.

The short winter day had closed in, and the snow was falling fast before the old Duke had finished his dinner. He was feeling far from well, for the journey had been an ordeal to him. The small company of eighty, including servants, he had brought with him, was mostly dispersed about the town and outbuildings of the hospital, settling themselves in their billets, when a party of Lords and their attendants arrived.

Viscount Beaumont, the Constable, entered the great refectory, followed by the Duke of Buckingham, the Marquis of Dorset (Edmund Beaufort), the Earl of Salisbury and Lord Sudeley.

The Duke growled a greeting, said he was tired and hoped their business was short or would wait.

"Short and painful, my lord Duke," replied the Constable, tapping him on the breast with his truncheon. "I arrest you, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, in the King's name for High Treason."

Gloucester staggered to his feet, gasping.

"How dare you," he stammered; "you base-born, dirty hounds! Out of my sight before I have you whipped. It's ill to jest with me."

"It is no jest, Gloucester," said Buckingham. "Here is the King's order in Council."

"The King's order, indeed! Out of my way, you scoundrels! I'll to the King and thrust his order down his puny throat, then I'll deal with you."

"The King's orders are that you remain here until the charges against you have been investigated," said Beaumont.

"I see it all," roared the Duke. "It's that bastard priest, Henry Beaufort. I'll wring his blasted neck for him and hang him with the strings of his own red hat, by St. George I will! Out of my way, I say. Out!"

"My lord," said Salisbury, "I implore your Grace to be calm, and not excite yourself and compel us to resort to force."

"Force? You say, force?" Gloucester screamed. "I'll use force! Do you curs think I'm alone? Do you think I can't match that linen draper, Suffolk, and the whole lot of you? Out of my way, I say!"

He raised both his fists in the air and took a step forward, then his jaw dropped, his hands fell to his side, his eyes became fixed, his knees gave way beneath him, and he sank, a crumpled heap, on the floor.

Gilbert Kymer ran to his master, and with the assistance of the lords laid him on the table and loosed his clothes. He was almost black in the face and breathing slowly and heavily.

"Will he recover?" asked Beaumont.

"I can't say," replied the doctor. "Leave him, I pray you. The sight of you when he comes to might give him another fit."

The constable left him in the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms and two yeomen warders. Forty-two of his attendants were quietly arrested and sent to various castles in the neighbourhood. No news was allowed to get to London. Four days later it was announced that

"Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, had died of choler and distemper at three bells of the forenoon after receiving extreme unction." The common people said he had been murdered in the same way that Richard II. had caused Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, to be murdered fifty years before.

On the 23rd of April, 1447, his body was exposed for all who cared to see, but most of the great lords were too busy dividing the spoils. The Queen took a large slice, and Suffolk another; King's College got his London house, Baynard's Castle, which they sold to the Duke of York; and Oxford University were given his books.¹ The Cardinal, not being there, got nothing, though de Moleyns did pretty well for himself, and many others shared to a smaller degree.

Only Abbot Wethamstead seemed to care. He bore the poor body away, and buried it in the shrine Humphrey had built for it years before in St. Albans Abbey.

Parliament raised no difficulties over attainting a dead man, for this saved them from having to vote a subsidy to pay the King's debts and benefactions.

"Thus endet Umffrey, Duke of Gloucetre."

IV

THIS final victory over a life-long enemy delighted the Cardinal despite his disappointment at receiving nothing material out of it. Great excitement is bad for old men. Four weeks after he had received the glad news, the Cardinal was struck down just as his enemy had been.

On the 11th April, he regained his speech. His thoughts turned to the passion which had ruled his life.

¹ These formed the foundation of the Bodleian Library.

“Can my great riches do nothing? Why should I, who possess such great wealth, die like any common man? Cannot death be hired?” he murmured.

But death refused to be hired. In the Cardinal’s will was found:

“To Queen Margarite, the bed and gold Damascus hangings from the room wherein she slept when she stayed with me at Waltham.”

Thus the Queen’s wish was gratified.

CHAPTER XVIII

RED KNIGHT

THE Duke of Gloucester being ended and Parliament prorogued, there was no further reason for keeping secret the terms of the Treaty of Nancy.

When Suffolk gave them out in Council, York was furious and led the opposition, insisting that the matter be brought before both houses of Parliament, as, by the act passed in Henry V.'s reign under no other condition could peace be made with France.

When Suffolk explained that this was not a treaty but the terms of a truce to lead to a treaty, York became more angry and asked Suffolk pointedly what he had got out of it.

"Let me inform your Grace," said Suffolk, with meaning, "I am no traitor nor were my ancestors executed for treason."

York bit his lip; for the shaft had struck a tender spot.

"No," he replied very quietly, "they were only whipped and put in the stocks for using false weights at country fairs."

It was Suffolk's turn to wince at this allusion to a story which had been spread about his grandfather, the Hull merchant.

"But my dear cousin," said Henry gently, "don't you see that I must keep my word?"

"No, I don't. It ought never to have been pledged. You didn't understand, so are not bound by it," said York.

"But I've got the best and dearest wife in the world by it. I must keep my part of it."

"A good bargain, perhaps, for you, sir, but a very poor one for England, I fear," replied York in a gentler voice.

"Say not so," murmured the King, "for never was man so blessed."

"What d'you think the old dog Talbot will say?" said Lord Cromwell, who was no friend of Suffolk. "D'you think he'll quietly give up two rich provinces, which he did so much to take?"

"The Duke of York, I imagine," sneered Suffolk, "should be able to control his subordinates."

"Then, that is all settled," smiled the King. "Our dear cousin will go out at once and arrange for these provinces to be handed back, and we will come over and visit King René there in the autumn. The Queen is most anxious to see her father and mother."

"Without the consent of Parliament, I will do no such thing," retorted York hotly.

"But Margarite insists on it," said the King, as if that settled it.

"I tell you, it is not only against the honour of England, but against the law. I will not give them up," replied York.

"In that case it will be necessary to find a Lieutenant who'll obey his orders," said Suffolk.

"My commission is settled for five years. I have even engaged my bodyguards and I've been proclaimed in Rouen."

"But it has not yet passed the Great Seal," replied Archbishop Stafford, the Chancellor.

"I have the King's word," said York.

"But you said yourself," de Moleyns put in, "that one

who does not understand is not pledged. When the King appointed you, he did not understand you would disobey his orders and fail to carry out his wishes."

"I shall go to France," said York, "and until the law is altered I will hold every foot of it to the uttermost of my power."

Suffolk saw that York's uncompromising manner to the King had somehow recalled the attitude of Gloucester and had offended the Council. Being an able politician, and a very good speaker, he seized this opportunity to deliver a defence of his actions or, as he put it, the King's. He explained that, by having the Queen's father in Anjou, England would have an ally there instead of an enemy, and could use the troops, which were now required to hold it, to strengthen her position in Guienne. He appealed to the King to bear him out that for everything he had done he had received his direct orders. Henry agreed that that was so.

The only answer to this defence was that the King was so great a fool that Suffolk had no business to take any orders from him. Not even York dared to say this.

Somerset had up till now taken no part in the discussion. Ever since York's return from France, he had been straining every nerve and pulling every string to get the Lieutenancy for himself, but had no intention of championing a cause so unpopular as the surrender of Maine, unless assured of a very substantial reward. The death of the Cardinal had been a great blow to him, for he left all his money to charity. He now saw a chance of strengthening his position without compromising himself on the Maine question.

He proposed a vote of confidence in Suffolk and condign punishment for all who should in future "detract" or abuse him for what he had done.

This was carried, and a proclamation drawn up to give effect to it. York and Cromwell left the Council chamber while it was being drafted. Suffolk's triumph was complete.

The Duke of Buckingham and Lord Salisbury, both moderate men, besides being fond of the Duke of York personally, took on themselves the rôle of peacemakers. They came to Baynard's Castle, where the Yorks were now living, in hope that with the aid of Cecily they might make the Duke see reason, for they foresaw that he would follow Gloucester if he maintained his present uncompromising attitude.

The Queen was furious with him for upsetting her hopes of a speedy reunion with her beloved family. The King was harrassed and depressed; the Council worried. It is very awkward to quarrel with a man to whom you owe £38,000 and who has just forgiven you £12,000 of it.

The two men found Cecily alone, and her brother at once started to enlist her support.

"My dear sister," Salisbury began; "you must make Richard see reason. The King has gone too far to go back. The last year has not improved matters in France. Shrewsbury is a good soldier, but a poor administrator. Without Richard's generosity the soldiers are unpaid and are little better than the free companies they were hanging when you left."

"What d'you want him to do?" said Cecily. "He'll never give up Maine and Anjou. It's no good asking him."

"He must obey the King," said Buckingham, "or resign his office."

"I don't suppose he'd mind that," said Cecily. "It's not been one of great profit."

"But who's to go in his place?" asked her brother.

"Somerset is clamouring for it," replied the Duke.

"He's a blundering fool like his brother, and is sure to mess everything," said Cecily.

"That's just it, he will. Can't you make Richard see that and do as the King wishes?" said Buckingham.

"No, I can't, and wouldn't if I could. It's a shameful thing to ask any man to do," Cecily replied with passion.

"But don't you see the danger he's in?" urged Buckingham.

"If you think to frighten me, you've come to the wrong person."

"No one is trying to frighten you, Cis," said her brother quietly; "but you saw what happened to Gloucester. The Queen rules now and is determined to let no one stand in her way. She and Suffolk have all Gloucester's power."

"I was surprised you two had any hand in that matter of the Duke," retorted Cecily. "You got little credit out of it and no love from the people."

"On the evidence produced, we had no choice but to obey the King in Council. Humphrey never curbed his temper, and his bastard son, Arthur, and his servants have confessed," replied Buckingham.

"Yes," said Cecily sarcastically, "and Suffolk produced the King's pardon at the gallows foot the moment they had finished their public confession, and restored them all their goods when they'd signed it. Don't forget it was Suffolk himself who tried and condemned them. Where were the rest of the conspirators? Were six men, headed by Master Chamberlain and the boy Arthur, going to upset the Kingdom? Is treason generally thus rewarded, even by gentle Henry? Oh! a likely story! I suppose Gloucester would have had equally fair treatment if he had not had a fit?"

"We would have seen he had a fair trial. I didn't give him a fit," replied Salisbury hotly.

"Perhaps the Queen did," said Cecily.

"Fore God, hush!" said her brother. "That's almost treason. Remember you are in London, not Rouen. Walls have ears." And he looked at Buckingham.

"Don't be afraid. I heard nothing," said the Duke; "but I'm sure you're wrong about the Queen. If Richard remains obdurate, Suffolk will trump up a charge against him, and his friends will not be strong enough to protect him. What do you say, Salisbury?"

"The Duke of York and Clarence can protect himself with a clear conscience and a strong right arm," said his wife proudly.

"Neither are proof against guile and numbers in these days, I fear," said the Duke, with a sigh. "The taller the tree, the more it feels the tempest."

There was a sound of horses coming down the street and a murmur of angry voices. Cecily's heart rose into her mouth. She was shortly expecting another child. Were they coming to arrest her husband? She had no means to resist, and York, popular though he was, had not the power to raise the mob like Gloucester. Salisbury stepped to the window; Buckingham looked uncomfortable; it is not pleasant to be found in the house of a man when he is arrested for treason.

"It's the King himself, and quite a company," said Salisbury. "The people don't seem pleased to see him. Can you hear what they are saying?"

Angry cries were gradually becoming plainer as the crowd came nearer.

"Where's Gloucester?" "Who killed good Duke Humphrey?" "Down with foreign poisoners!" "Where's

the good Duke?" "Turn out this linendraper!" "Death to the linendraper!"

"The King won't like this; better call out the servants and open the gate," said Salisbury.

"D'you think they have come for him?" Cecily asked quietly. "If so, you had better slip out by the back way to the river and warn him before he comes home. D'you know where he is?"

"No, I don't, but send a trusted servant to watch the river for him. I stay here with you," said Salisbury.

"Richard is with the King," the Duke of Buckingham called out from the window. "He seems urging him to come in here."

In a few minutes the King and his nobles entered the yard, while York spoke to the angry crowd.

The King was very pale, and trembling all over, but turned his horse to face the crowd till York had entered the yard and the gates were shut.

"Send for the Lord Mayor and have these rascals dispersed," said the Bishop of Chichester, who had an instinctive fear of a crowd.

"Better leave 'em alone," growled Henry Bourchier, the Master of the Horse. "They've done no harm."

"They will if something isn't done soon," said Lord Grey de Ruthyn.

"Mark my words," said the Bishop, shaking his finger. "They'll tear some of us to pieces, if they don't get a sharp lesson."

"And not much loss some of you would be," this from Cecily, who had overheard the remark from below.

The York servants, to the number of about a hundred, had now fallen in under arms.

"I had better open the gates and beat up this rabble," Lord Sudeley said, turning to the King.

"Forsooth, no. They have done me no harm. Their calling for justice for one they loved is highly commendable, whatever their ignorance in doing so. Let them be, I pray."

Henry was helped from his horse and assisted by two of his valets into the hall, where he sank exhausted into a chair. They brought him some wine, but he asked for water, since he had vowed not to touch wine for a week.

Henry's was one of those complex natures that make martyrs. Terrified of all danger, far from not facing it, he made no attempt to avoid it. Rather than turn into Baynard's Castle, he would have been torn to pieces had he been by himself. He had only been prevailed to do so for the sake of others. Though too feeble to carry the lightest armour, or wield even a small sword, he never shirked a battle. He was not at Towton solely because he felt his first duty on Palm Sunday was to attend high mass in York Minster.

York turned aside to his brother-in-law.

"Did you ever see such a man? It was all we could do to make him come in here, yet he almost fell off his horse with fright. He told us to leave him if we were afraid."

"He's an odd character," said Archbishop Stafford; "but you can't help loving him."

"That's true, you can't," York replied, and under his breath, "I wish to God I could. A King! Holy Mother of God! A King of England trembling and sweating for fear of a few dirty apprentices and a hundred armed men at his back."

"Fair cousin," said the King, turning to York, "I would speak to you and your dear wife alone."

The rest withdrew leaving clear the upper end of the hall.

"There is no one I respect or love better than your husband," said Henry, turning to Cecily. "Why is he so obstinate? I know I am doing right; every one says so. Margarite; the Cardinal (God rest his soul, good pious man); Suffolk who is so wise and experienced. You don't know how he saves me, he does everything; so thoughtful. You know without him I should never have got my dearest wife. I can never forget that. She's so marvellous. So many men seem not to love their wives and quarrel with them; we never do, God and his angels be thanked. Isn't it wonderful? But what was I saying? Oh, why are you so headstrong, Cecily, my dear? You will make him do the right thing, won't you? It only wants a word from you and I am sure he will. I always do what Margarite asks me."

For all her talk, Cecily had received a very severe fright. There had been time for her brother's words to sink in.

"What do you require of us, sir?" she asked.

"Only to right a great wrong and restore King René his heritage," said the King.

"That, I fear, I can never do, sir," said York earnestly. "In my opinion it would be against your honour as well as mine."

"What am I to do?" said Henry weakly.

"Appoint another Lieutenant," said Cecily. "Richard will resign his commission into your hands."

"If he will do that, he shall have anything in my power to give—lands, castles, jewels, anything," said Henry, with his usual open-hearted generosity. If York had asked for Windsor at that moment, he would have got it. Instead he looked at his wife in speechless bewilderment.

She gave him a quick, beseeching look, and signed

with her hands towards Buckingham and Salisbury. They had not heard, but guessed and nodded their heads in the direction of Cecily.

"I am your Highness's loyal subject," said York. "I have made my protest and, as I cannot carry out your wishes, I resign all claim on the Lieutenancy of France."

"My dear cousin, what can I do for you," said the King. "I will make you King of Ireland. My lords, come near and hear the good news. My Lord of York has decided to rule Ireland instead of France."

"But I don't want to go to Ireland," York said, rather taken aback.

"Oh, please do! The country is in such a state of anarchy, they tell me, perhaps I should not ask you. If anything happened to you, as it did to your poor Uncle Mortimer, and his father, I should never forgive myself. I quite understand how dangerous and difficult it is. No one has ever done any good there. No, I am sure Cecily would never allow you to go.

"I can assure your Highness that I would never stand in my husband's way where his duty and honour lead him," replied Cecily, "but . . ."

The King did not allow her to finish.

"Sweet Cecily, how brave you are, just like my Queen, so if Richard is really not afraid, he will go. How kind you all are to me." And the King smiled down on them like some saint in a stained-glass window.

"Sometimes his Highness has moments of genius," whispered the Chancellor to the Treasurer.

"I'm not afraid of danger," said York, adding quickly, "I'll go if I have an absolutely free hand."

"Any terms you like," said Suffolk. "If you really aren't afraid to go."

"I'm not," replied York; "but I must have an un-

breakable tenure of ten years. The receipt of all revenues, to return whenever I wish, and the right to appoint my Deputy."

"Certainly. Whatever you wish you shall have. Any money you want, anything," said the King.

"That will be a very pleasant change," smiled York, glancing at the Treasurer.

Though he had been trapped into accepting what amounted to exile, he was not sorry to visit Ireland. He had never seen his vast estates there, inherited from the de Burghs, Clares and Mortimers. He was Earl of Ulster and Cork. Anyway, it would be better to rule in Dublin, than to fight a losing battle with Suffolk in London.

"You will find a lot of left-handed cousins there," said Buckingham.

"You'll have to look after him, Cecily," Salisbury laughed, "and see he does not follow the custom of the country. These native chiefs have as many wives as the Grand Turk."

"Is that really so?" asked the King. "I am surprised you should speak of such an ungodly state of affairs, my lord, with such ill-becoming levity. I trust Richard will reform their morals when he gets there, and not follow their evil ways. It would be very sad if he did that."

Suffolk was naturally delighted at the turn of events. His path was clear. Somerset could now have the Lieutenancy of France, and York would probably be murdered; anyway, he would bury his reputation and his fortune in that distressful country as so many have before and since.

CHAPTER XIX

THE WHITE KING RETIRES

THE Lieutenantcy of Ireland was certainly an even less desirable position than that of France. For generations the mismanagement there had been appalling. The unfortunate settlers were not only exposed to attacks from the semi-savage natives, but suffered even more from the soldiers they were heavily taxed to support. So intolerable had conditions become that acts of parliament had to be passed in Ireland to compel the colonists to remain there, and in England to return by force those who had escaped.

The Lord Lieutenant was supposed to receive about £5000 a year and the Irish revenues. The £5000 was hardly ever paid and the revenues, owing to the general state of disorder all over the country, were wholly insufficient to pay the officers of the crown, let alone the soldiers.

The ancient Norman families of Butler, represented by the Earl of Ormond and his son the Earl of Wiltshire on the one hand, and the FitzGeralds, Earls of Kildare and Desmond on the other, were continually at war. This feud was further complicated by the Talbots taking a hand in it in the persons of Lord Shrewsbury and his brother Richard, Archbishop of Dublin, who together had held respectively the appointments of Lieutenant and Lord Deputy on more than one occasion.

Shrewsbury, the Old Dog, was a fine rugged soldier, whom time had not softened. Though nearly eighty when appointed Lieutenant a second time in 1446, he proceeded to attack and put the fear of God into the various septs or tribes in the south-east. The native writers describe

him "as the worst man to be born since Herod, who crucified Christ." The Archbishop, who became his Deputy in 1449, was not as good a soldier as his brother, and the several reverses he received made the appointment of the Duke of York imperative.

The very moment his patent had been made out, York appointed Richard Nugent, Baron Devlin, his Deputy and ordered him to call a parliament at Drogheda.

On the 6th July, 1449, the Duke arrived at Howth with his wife and family, having brought with him a body of picked troops to impress the natives.

On landing, he called a council of Irish native chiefs, and reminded them that he was Earl of Ulster, Clare and Cork, Lord of Trim, and, like them, of ancient Irish stock. Four of the most important, Magennis of Iveagh, Macmahon of Farney, the two chiefs of the O'Reilly, swore allegiance and promised to assist him in reducing Brien O'Byrne who had sent the insolent answer, that as he did not wear English clothes, or talk English, he would not attend.

York's reply was that he would come and teach him, and with a force of about 3000 men, most of them supplied by the Irish chiefs, he invaded O'Byrne's country. Nor did he take long to round him up, make him swear allegiance, pay a tribute of twopence an acre and promise that he and his family would learn English and wear the English clothes which the Duke presented them with.

After this success, the Duke held an investiture with great pomp at Symonds Wood, where he knighted Robert Preston Lord Gormanstown, Christopher Plunket Lord Killeen, the Mayor of Dublin and several others.

Many chiefs, who had been in open war, including the great O'Neill of Ulster, O'Farrel, O'More, O'Dempsey from the south, McMurragh from beyond the Pale,

O'Nolan and Macgeoghegan from the west, voluntarily came to Dublin with gifts of cattle. McMurragh, the most important of them, lived just beyond the Pale and had been a thorn in the side of the Viceroys at Dublin for years; none of whom had been able to reduce him to order.

Brian O'Byrne was much taken with the Duke's manner, and, to show there was no ill-feeling over his defeat, sent the Duchess a pair of hobby hawks. At Michaelmas, York proclaimed a great feast at Dublin Castle. The news of his generosity had soon spread abroad. No Irish chief left his presence without some gift. He had inherited from his mother the art of understanding these queer people.

They have changed very little in 500 years. The extravagant language in their complaints, the certain prophecies of utter annihilation and complete disaster, unless some one else does something for them, appear already in the fifteenth century petitions from various tribes.

The town of Cork sent a letter stating they were entirely undone and had never been in such a state of utter ruin or disaster since the time the English first came to Ireland, and they would all be completely destroyed unless two good judges and twenty Englishmen were at once sent to settle a dispute between the town and some of the local gentry. It ended up by saying: "If you do not this, then we are all cast away, and then farewell to Munster for ever; and if you will not come or send, we will send to our liege lord the King for remedy and complaint upon you all."

Another complaint was that "Sir John Stanley gave neither clergy or laity mercy nor protection, but subjected as many of them as came within reach of his power to cold, hardship, and famine. It was he, who had plundered

and utterly destroyed the hereditary bard Fiall O'Higgins and had taken three cows off him, but he had his revenge on him, for hadn't he wrote such a poem about him, that he died within five weeks of the virulence of it?"

York listened to all such petitions and then with a shrewd remark often pricked their bubble. This duke was signally well informed of past history. He knew that if an Irishman were allowed to go on talking long enough to a sympathetic listener he would generally give an inkling of the other side of the case.

After hearing a frightful tale of rapine and murder, York would turn suddenly to the speaker, and say:

"But didn't you bury his father up to his neck and leave him to be eaten by ants?"

"I did not, by God, it was me uncle that did it, and he was not eaten by ants at all, at all, but died a natural death, since he died of the very fear he had in him."

On another occasion he suddenly asked:

"What was the cause of the trouble between you? Was it a woman?"

"Sure, your Grace would have done the same, for a more ill-tempered, cross-grained woman, God never put breath into. I sent her back to him in a week and he should have been honoured that I'd taken her to me bed, that he should, she was that ill-favoured."

"So you seized this man's wife, raped her and turned her out of your house with insults, and expect me to protect you. I'll send and find out what damages he requires, and you will remain my guest till they're paid."

York's guests were many and lived in part of the castle which was rather dark and damp. They were taken the greatest care of and carefully locked up in case they might come to any harm, but when they returned home from their visit, it sounded much better to have been the

Duke's guest than his prisoner, and made them easier to handle afterwards, as their dignity had not been hurt.

Some of the cases were not without their comic side. York worked on the system that it was much easier and infinitely cheaper to win and rule these wild people with the gift of a silver sword belt, a cloak of honour or a gilt bridle, than with a large army of heavily clad soldiers who got stuck in the bogs and were always dying of fever.

John FitzGerald came and made a long complaint of how John More had stolen a hundred head of cattle to his utter destruction and that of all his family.

"They did not happen to be part of those you and More lifted off McDermot, by any chance?" asked York, who had just received a complaint from that aggrieved gentleman.

"They were, your Grace," said the indignant FitzGerald. "That makes it so black a shame and disgrace, for did I not share those with him to the very last born calf, by all the saints in heaven, I did. If the blackguard is allowed to rob from those he lifts cattle with, where in heaven is a man to look for honesty?"

"Where indeed," said York. "I'll see all the cattle are returned to their rightful owner—McDermot."

It was by such touches he kept the country at peace and endeared himself to its people.

All the chiefs of Eastern Ulster and Leinster, including the Earl of Desmond and many rebel Englishry, attended the Michaelmas feast, but York's greatest triumph was a month later when his son Edmund was born. He invited the Earls of Ormond and Desmond to be the baby's god-fathers. Both were naturally delighted with the honour, and thus were induced to meet and bury the hatchet, anyway for the time being.

York designated his second son Edmund, Earl of Cork, one of the titles he had inherited from his grandfather,

Edmund of Langley. This greatly pleased the people of that town.

Having obtained the good will of the septs beyond the Pale, York proceeded to set about internal reforms. He called a Parliament to meet in Dublin in November and tackled the burning questions of the Marchers.

The Marchers had originally been given land on condition that they guarded the marches against the attacks of the natives. This duty entailed the keeping of a certain number of soldiers in constant readiness, a custom that had given rise to the grave abuses, set out in the act he now laid before Parliament.

Marchers were forbidden under heavy penalties to keep more soldiers than they and their tenants could support without quartering them on their neighbours, and "destroying their crops and harvest to their loss by day and night, and paying nothing but as oft times robbing spoiling and killing them." The act further forbade the custom of night suppers or cuddies when a marcher with his wives (sic) pages, sons, horsemen and footmen to the number of 100 or more accompanied by as many Irish enemies and rebel English would descend on some unfortunate colonist and demand entertainment. If this was refused, or not thought good enough, the guests would often rob and kill the unfortunate host and destroy his house and family. Another grave objection to this practice, the act pointed out, was that it enabled the rebels and enemy Irish to spy out the land, and learn all the defences, in other words, showed the cat where the cream was kept.

An Act was also passed giving a large reward to any liege subject who should kill a notorious robber, plunderer, or evil doers. To quote its words: "a penny from each plough land and a farthing from every cot

within the barony where the manslaughter was done and to be collected and paid within one month by the said sheriff, to him who made the homicide."

But Ireland was far from peaceful. Flynn O'Driscoll raised trouble in Wexford and Waterford, where Shrewsbury had unsuccessfully tried to re-establish English rule. The Duke of York sent out a proclamation ordering all the neighbouring counties and towns round Baltimore, where O'Driscoll had established himself, to blockade him and have no dealings with him of any sort whatever, under a penalty of £40. This boycott soon reduced him to obedience.

Thus, with an iron hand under the velvet glove, the Duke not only brought comparative order to the Pale, but extended the rule of the King to nearly every part of Ireland.

The expense was simply enormous. York was still owed what amounted in values to-day to close on a quarter of a million for his services in France, and during these years in Ireland he had not received a penny piece of his salary. He was now compelled to pawn his jewels and plate, and pledge his personal credit to the hilt to pay his soldiers and the officers of the Crown.

The continual bad news from France tended to create unrest and lower the prestige of England amongst the Irish. In May, 1451, MacGeoghegan attacked Meath from the West and burnt Rathmore and many other towns. York advanced at once against him, but found him so strong, that he considered it wise to accept his submission without inflicting any reparations from him for the damage he had done.

It was becoming increasingly clear to York that he could not go on paying for the whole government of Ireland out of his own pocket, and that, unless supplies were forthcoming from England, things would soon be

as bad as he had found them. He therefore sent on June 15th, 1451, the following letter (printed in full by Gilbert in *Viceroy of Ireland*) by his page Roger Roe to his brother-in-law, Lord Salisbury, one of the Lords of the Council. Having begun with the usual greeting, it goes on to report that "the Irish enemy MacGeoghegan, with three or four Irish captains associated with a great fellowship of Irish rebels, had burnt my large town of Rathmore, with some adjacent villages, in my patrimony of Meath, and remained assembling in woods and forts waiting to do hurt and grievance to the King's subjects. For the which cause, I write at this time unto the King's Highness, and beseech his good grace for to hasten my payments for this land, according to his letters of warrant, now late directed unto the Treasurer of England to the intent I may wage men to sufficient number for to resist the malice of the same enemies and to punish them in such wise, that others which would do the same for lack of resistance in time may take example; for, doubtless but if my payments be not had in all haste, for to have men of war in defence and safeguard of this land, my power cannot stretch to keep it in the King's obeisance. And very necessity will compel me to come to England to live there, upon my livelihood, for I would lever be dead than any inconvenience should fall there unto in my default; for it shall never be chronicled, nor remain in scripture by the Grace of God, that Ireland was lost by my negligence there, I beseech you, right worshipful brother, that you will hold to your hands instantly, that my payments may be had at this time, in eschewing all inconveniences, for I have example in other places, more pity it is to dread shame and for to acquit my truth unto the King's Highness, as my duty is. And this, I pray and exhort you, good brother to show unto his good grace,

and that you will be so good this language may be enacted at this present Parliament for my excuse in time to come."

This hardly strikes one as the letter of a man steeped up to his eyes in treason and instigating a common fellow like Jack Cade to overthrow the Government of England, yet York's enemies at a later date did so accuse him. It should be remembered also that this was a private letter, not only to his wife's brother, but his own greatest friend.

Cecily did not like Ireland. Dublin had all the disadvantages of London, and none of its advantages. The Castle was inconvenient and in bad repair. Every storm blew off some portion of the roof. They lived in a perpetual state of siege. She was cut off from all her friends and relations, and had no one near her own rank or education to talk to.

For the first time she knew what poverty meant. All her life she had had command of unlimited money, now she hardly knew where to turn for food for her huge establishment. The Duke of York was in a worse position than his predecessors, who had been allowed by law to requisition all they needed from the colonists, a right so shockingly abused that it had been stopped by the English Parliament.

Cecily's difficulties may be better understood if the scale of her housekeeping is realised.

The requisition on Roscommon, where Christmas week was spent during Sir J. Stanley's reign, consisted of 460 bushels of flour, 1040 bushels of oats, 60 bullocks, 100 geese, 4 boars, 80 large and 40 small pigs, 400 rabbits, 600 poultry, 6 lambs, 2500 herrings, 100 cod, 1000 whiting, 100 salt salmon, and 2000 gallons of ale, as well as forage for the horses. Besides this there was wine, salt, sugar, mustard, pepper, etc., which had to be imported from England at great expense.

CHAPTER XX

THREE WHITE PAWNS

ON a hot August day in 1451 a small ship sailed up the muddy waters of the Liffey and came to anchor below Dublin Castle. From it three men disembarked and made their way through the town. They walked stiffly, for their limbs ached from the cramped conditions of their slow sea journey from France.

At the entrance of the Castle they inquired for the Duke of York, giving their names to the porter as de Vere, Bedford and Hall. The porter asked if they were not knights, but they pointed to their heels which bore no spurs.

After a short interval they were brought to the Duke in his office, who at the sight of them jumped up and held out both hands.

"Welcome indeed, my old comrades," he exclaimed. "I thought it must be you, but the fool said that the men who wished to see me were not knights. How goes it at my city of Caen?"¹

But the three men held back and made no motion to take his proffered hand.

"We left our spurs and our honour there on a heap of gold to buy whole skins," replied Sir David Hall bitterly, "and are now come here to be hanged as cowards and traitors."

"You left us to hold Caen for you to the death," added Sir John Bedford, the bastard of Duke John. "We not only betrayed it, but paid for doing so."

¹ Caen belonged to the Duke of York and he had appointed these three men to hold it for him.

"What d'you mean?" asked the Duke. "Has Caen indeed been taken? I feared so when I saw your sad faces."

"No, not taken," said Sir Robert de Vere with a wry smile, "just given away like the rest of France, with a handful of gold thrown in, the same as Rouen, by a pack of cowardly knaves like ourselves."

"My friends," said York quietly, "whatever you say, I will never believe you to be traitors or cowards. Firstly because we have been in too many fights together, and secondly because you are here. Take my hand and tell me your tale later when we are alone. After you are rested and fed, things won't look so black."

York walked up to de Vere and clapping him on the shoulder, seized his hand and wrung it warmly.

"You're right to welcome us," said de Vere, "traitors are all the fashion these days."

Bedford said nothing, but the Duke winced at the pressure with which he returned his handshake. When he came to old David Hall, he looked at his glum face.

"Cheer up, Davy," he said, "you'll live long enough to be Captain of Paris yet."

Hall tried to speak, but to the great embarrassment of the Duke, he burst into loud sobs and covered his hand with kisses.

"We'll have dinner in half an hour, and afterwards you shall tell me about it from the beginning. In this far off hole one hears very little, and that little is often a lie." Turning to a page the Duke told him to take the knights to the upper guest chamber and supply them with all they needed. "At dinner, then, in half an hour," he said cheerily, his heart glad at seeing his friends, and knowing he would at last hear the truth about Normandy.

After dinner the Duke withdrew with the Duchess and

his old comrades to a small room. His guests had drunk deep to drown their sorrow, and the wine had affected each differently.

"Now for your story from the very beginning," said York. "Remember I know nothing from the time I left England."

"It's quickly told," said de Vere lightly. "In one year we have been kicked out of Normandy neck and crop by a pack of beggarly Frenchmen, and paid them handsomely for doing it. That's all. Calais hadn't fallen when we left, but then it hadn't been attacked, though, as Somerset is there, that would hardly be necessary. A herald and two archers would be enough."

"But how could this happen?" asked Cecily, "we were more than holding our own when I left. Charles never dared to meet us in the open."

"It was thus," said Bedford bluntly. "You left five years ago. After that no one was paid, and every man had to look after himself. Then came the rumours about Maine and Anjou. No one believed them, and after you had been proclaimed in Rouen about the time of Gloucester's death, we thought all would be well. Then Somerset came out as Captain-General, and we heard you were coming here. It was not till July (1447), when old Mat Gough and Fulk Eyton turned up at Le Mans with the King's writ for its surrender, that we realised what was being done."

"It took the very hearts out of us," said Hall. "Osbert Mundford was in command there, and had dug himself in very snugly. He refused to surrender it unless Somerset countersigned the King's writ."

"Somerset, they say, put him up to it," said Bedford. "That Duke is no fool, where his own interest lies. The French pressed for the surrender, and when Somerset was

ordered to make Mundford obey, he replied that he was only Captain-General, and therefore not in a position to act as civil governor. Suffolk was thus compelled to make him Lieutenant of France; that was in September. Then the Old Dog took a hand and invented all sorts of obstacles to the surrender. The French threatened war, but it was not till February when Dunois appeared with an army, that the matter was really taken seriously."

"You've forgotten the rare jest of it," said de Vere. "Gough and Eyton had by this time got inside Le Mans on the King's writ, having ousted Mundford; and it was they who now refused to surrender. Dunois lost patience at last and told old Jean Bureau to open fire with his guns."

"He's a very good gunner, is Bureau," said Hall. "His handling of his pieces at Caen was most able."

"Yes, a good man, I know," said York; "but about Le Mans?"

"Bishop de Moleyns and Lord Roos came out from England, and old Mat couldn't hold on any longer; so in the middle of March (1449) Le Mans was handed over," continued Bedford.

"My lord Marquess of Dorset was rewarded for this great victory by the Dukedom of Somerset," added de Vere lightly. "They ought to have made Gough Duke of Gloucester, and Mundford Earl of Kent; they had taken less than a year to obey their King."

"They'll come to a bad end," said Hall. "I've always said so, and repeat it."

"You can imagine," went on Bedford, "the garrison were not best pleased at being turned out, and Mundford was like a bear with a sore head. Any pickings had gone to Gough and de Moleyns; all he got was a company of unpaid men. The Captains of other towns could not feed

their own men, let alone pay any more. Mundford, therefore, occupied Beauvau and Mortain on the Brittany border and refortified them. Duke Francis protested that this was against his treaty with us, and Charles backed him up. Somerset said Mundford had nothing to do with him and they should apply to Suffolk, who told them both to go to the devil. When we asked for pay and reinforcements we were told anything available was needed for the Scottish war." Here Bedford paused for breath.

"Misfortunes never come singly," struck in Hall.

"Yes," said Cecily, "but my brother, Salisbury, gave those Scots a sharp lesson at Dumfries, and Percy burnt Dunbar, though he was later routed at Gretna."

"France was always neglected," said Hall gloomily; "we always came last. No one cared whether we lived or died."

"I don't know that you were worse off than any one else," said York, smiling; "I've not had a pinch of salt from England since I came here, and I'm told the King's household servants are over £3000 in arrears of their wages, and even the service of his chapel is in debt for nearly £400. Last time I saw old Brocas, he told me he had not been paid even the food of the hounds for over three years, and had been put off with the meadow on the north bank of the Thames opposite the Castle, which the King had also given to his college of Eton.¹ But go on, Bedford, tell us what happened."

"As I said, dogs before men," said Hall, "dogs before men."

"Well, nothing much happened after Le Mans had been given up. Things settled down for about a year. On Lady Day (1450) that Aragonais, François Surienne, attacked and sacked without rhyme or reason the Breton

¹ Brocas and South Meadow where the Eton boathouse now is.

town of Fougères. He'd collected a force from the Normandy garrisons."

"Not so," said de Vere. "He had reason. Was he not a friend of Suffolk's, who had made him a Knight of the Garter the year before, for the express purpose of protecting his wool trade? Fougères was interfering with Suffolk's profit, and in spite of the fact that he had exempted himself and the Queen from the wool export tax, he did not like their competition."

"That man is nothing but a trader; an evil day it was when his grandfather lent King Edward money," said Cecily.

"He is very thorough, though," said de Vere. "You must grant him that. Not content with thus upsetting Duke Francis, he made Bob Winnington, the most notorious corsair 'twixt Land's End and Dover, an Admiral, to keep the narrow seas free from pirates," and de Vere roared with laughter. "A rare jape indeed, a rare jape! All he did was to attack the Hanseatic Salt Fleet and share the proceeds with Suffolk, just as the Aragonais divided with him the loot from Fougères. Suffolk doesn't make enemies for nothing."

"Any man who was not mad would have known that attacking this fleet would be enough excuse to turn Burgundy against us. Duke Philip had been looking for a chance to betray us ever since your Grace left," said Hall.

"Charles and Francis demanded satisfaction from Somerset, who denied all knowledge of de Surienne and referred them to Suffolk," continued Bedford.

"Do you mean to tell me that any man can collect an army from the Normandy garrisons and the Lieutenant of France know nothing about it?" demanded York.

"Oh, quite so," said de Vere. "After you left we just

did as we liked. If Somerset said anything to any of us, we asked for pay. The Aragonais promised to pay on this occasion, so no possible objection could be raised."

"In May," continued the stolid Bedford, "as they could get no satisfaction, the French, under the Breton banner, surprised and captured Pont de l'Arche with her Grace's brother Lord Falconbridge; the next day they captured Gerberoy and Conches."

"I was with Somerset at Rouen, when the news came," interrupted de Vere. "I had gone to try and get some pay for the Caen garrison, not that I had the least hope of getting any, but as an excuse to visit Rouen. It's possible to have a good time there; Caen is as dull as the bottom of a dry well. I give you my word, Somerset was dumbfounded, and swore that Charles was the most treacherous knave in Christendom to break truce in this way; on my soul, he did."

"It didn't bring him to his senses," said Bedford. "In July the French and Bretons sent in an ultimatum. It was fair and generous; they offered to give us back the towns they'd taken, as well as Lord Falconbridge, if we'd return Fougères and its contents, but what could Somerset do? All that was of value from the town had been shipped to England to my lord wool-merchant Suffolk. When the terms were sent to him, he refused them."

"I had heard my brother was a prisoner," said Cecily, "but not about the terms."

"I was sent over with them," said de Vere. "Suffolk wouldn't listen to reason, though he promised me £5,000 to raise a force in England with the help of Lord Powys, but we could get neither money nor men."

"Lord Shrewsbury did his best," continued Bedford. "He saw our only chance was to concentrate, call in every garrison, and attack France first and then Brittany

before they could join forces. Burgundy did not himself declare war, but let his nobles know they could help France if they liked."

"It looked easy plunder, so most of them did," said de Vere. "Our captains refused to obey Shrewsbury, for they had been at their posts too long and their roots were too deep in. Mundford set the example as usual; an insubordinate dog he always was and always will be."

"Mark my words," said Hall, "one day he'll go too far and be hanged, you'll see if he isn't."

"On the 31st July, the deluge started," went on Bedford, ignoring these interruptions. "Francis attacked from the west, Dunois and Charles swept in with two columns from the south, and the Burgundians came at us from the east. De Foix, with the assistance of his Majesty's loyal Gascon subjects attacked his castles in Guienne. By November we had lost thirty-six walled towns, and Somerset was shut up in Rouen." Bedford up to now had spoken quietly, but here passion entered into his voice. "On the day Somerset paid to give up Rouen, on that day I thanked God my noble father was dead. In three months that toad, that monkey in man's clothes, that lump of crawling carrion had undone his life's work. May he rot and burn in hell for a thousand years."

"You can't blame Somerset for everything," said Hall. "Many of the French and Norman captains your father appointed shamefully betrayed their trust. I always said it was a mistake to trust any foreigners, but who ever listened to a poor honest soldier? I mentioned the matter to your Grace, when you followed the same practice, if you remember."

"They would have been faithful to my father or to the Duke here," said Bedford, "but who can blame a man for leaving such a service? Even the Aragonais repud-

iated it with scorn, and threw his Garter back in Somerset's face."

"What!" exclaimed York, "that low-bred cur returned his Garter? Impossible!"

"Let me tell, I pray you," said de Vere. "It's indeed as rare a pleasantry as you ever heard. Our friend Sir Henry is a good chronicler, but is apt to miss the finer points. My Lord Duke of Somerset surrendered Rouen on the terms that he might take away all his own goods and chattels, but must leave the King's guns and gold to the tune of 50,000 écus d'or; the Old Dog, Talbot—who is worth a dozen of him—with Jack Butler of Ormond, Tom Ross,¹ her Grace of Somerset's son, Tom Dacre of the North, and one of your Grace's brothers," he added, turning to Cecily, "were to be hostages for the surrender of half the remaining towns we still possessed in Normandy. The Aragonais, who, as you remember, started all this trouble by sacking Fougères, and made the war certain by sending the plunder to England, now proceeds to sell the town back to Francis, without striking a blow, for 10,000 écus d'or. To complete the joke, he returned his Garter to Somerset with a polite note to say that he could no longer wear it, as it reminded him of his service with the English, not one of whom was fit for any gentleman of Spain to associate with."

"By St. Nicholas, he's right! He'll have to go to the Ghettoes of Venice, or Germany, to find his equals," muttered Hall.

"True," de Vere agreed, "he should have excepted his friend Suffolk, and I'm sure he'd have found poor old dunderheaded Somerset an apt pupil; his heart's in the right place; it's his head that's in the wrong one, the same as Suffolk's." De Vere again shouted with laughter,

¹ Duchess of Somerset's son by her first husband.

and even grim old Sir David almost smiled. "They should be on a block."

"Sir Robert, I think your levity is misplaced," said Cecily severely. "Knightly honour is not a matter for jest, especially that of the fellowship of St. George."

"May you never learn, my fair cousin," said de Vere, "that it's sometimes better to laugh than to cry." His mouth was still smiling, but his eyes were hard as steel.

York looked at this tall, loose-limbed, curled and scented sprig of the house of Oxford, with his loud laugh and smiling mouth, as he lounged idly in his chair, admiring his long legs; he looked at the grim face of the sturdy Sir David with his deep chest; and at Bedford's huge powerful shoulders, as he sat upright, grinding his teeth and clenching and unclenching his great hands.

"I shouldn't care to be de Surienne if any of you three ever came across him," he said slowly. "Davy would just hang him. Bedford would choke the life out of him with his great hands, but I wouldn't trust you, Robert, not to be really rough with him. Eh?"

"I don't know, but if ever I get hold of the noble Duke, I'm afraid I might, as you say, be a little rough with him. The Aragonais has given us a laugh, the other has for ever branded us as cowards. Tell him about it, John; the Duchess says I'm frivolous."

"What made the surrender of Rouen the more disgraceful was, that Kyrielle had an army of 5,000 men at Portsmouth waiting to come over. Why they remained there for six months doing nothing, God alone knows."

"I think I share that knowledge with the Almighty, but go on," said York.

"Well, we went on losing castle after castle. The new year (1451) began badly with the loss of Harfleur. When Kyrielle arrived in the middle of March he went to

Cherbourg, instead of Calais where he might have done some good. Somerset ordered him to headquarters, but he preferred to plunder a few small towns on the border. Mat Gough and de Vere, here, were sent to join him. He might have fallen on de Clermont at Carentan, but neither seemed anxious to fight, though the people attacked our rear guards as we crossed the sands at the mouth of the Vire.

"Next day de Clermont followed us and forced us to turn at Formigny. Kyrielle relied on the old Agincourt formation, thinking the French had learned nothing. He might have won if only he had charged when their attack faltered, but he waited till the Constable de Richmond came up and turned his flank. Sir Robert and Mat managed to get away, but Kyrielle's army were entirely cut to pieces; and not much loss either, for a worse lot of rascallions I never saw—worse than Frenchmen. They never did a single thing that was any use."

"You forget they tore de Moleyns to pieces," said de Vere, "when the good Bishop went to Portsmouth to pay them, because they thought he was withholding half their pay for himself; and they thought rightly too, unless I sadly misjudge that very worthy prelate."

"De Richmond was a prisoner of war at Raby. I remember that it was he and Ralph Nevile who brought the news of Agincourt. It's the first thing I remember. Your father," said York, turning to Cecily, "told me he swore he'd never fight with the French again. But go on."

"You remember old Mother Lampet, Sir John's wife?" Bedford asked, "she put up a great defence at Avranches. Sir John was killed the first day of the siege, so she put on his armour and commanded the garrison for two months against Duke Francis; and, after Formigny,

against the Constable as well. Somerset did nothing to relieve her, and when all the food had gone she put on her skirt and got excellent terms for herself and her men. Some say she bewitched Duke Francis or poisoned him; anyway he died two days after seeing her."

"I think to be beguiled by Mother Lampet would kill me without the help of witchcraft or poison," put in de Vere.

"As soon as Somerset heard that Bob Winnington had beheaded my Lord Suffolk, he shut himself up in your city of Caen. I still was Captain of the Dungeon, Davy held the Town, while Sir Robert was Constable of the Castle. We could have held out for years. Certainly we had the whole force of France, Burgundy and Brittany round us, but we had received stores and powder in November, which was the only useful thing Suffolk did for us. The siege began on the 5th June. Dunois lay opposite Vaucelles on the south-east, de Richmond and de Clermont on the west by St. Stephen's Abbey on the Bayeux road, while the Count of Eu was on the north at the Nunnery of la Trinité. We retired from the suburbs of St. Stephen. Soon after, King Charles arrived with Queen Margarite's father and her brother the Count de Maine. Hall had very hard fighting all round Vaucelles, and when Bureau finally brought down the walls he had to retire inside the town proper.

"The Duchess of Somerset was in the Keep. All went well till the 24th, when a cannon ball came into the room where she and her children were. The next thing we knew was that Somerset had sold the whole boiling, actually paying 300,000 écus d'or for the honour of giving everything up. We could have held them for years. On the 6th July, we marched out. On the 11th, Falaise was exchanged for the Old Dog. Trollope gave up Gournay

in exchange for his old friend Mundford, who had been captured at Beauvau."

"A good match those two," said Hall. "Mark my words, they will come to no good."

"When we left, Thomas Gower was defending Cherbourg, but it was only a matter of days," continued Bedford. "Somerset took himself off to Calais. So that's the end of all our rule in Normandy."

"Things seem to have been sadly mismanaged," said York, "and who is to govern England now? I'm sure I don't know."

"Yourself," said de Vere, "there's no one else."

"I'm exiled here for another seven years."

"When we left France, we heard of a turmoil going on in Kent," said Bedford. "A man calling himself Jack Cade, or Mortimer, was raising all England and, it was said, had defeated the King's forces, killing Sir Humphrey Stafford with his cousin, Sir William. The rebels were demanding your recall."

"So I heard," said York shortly.

"In exchange for our news, can you tell us how Suffolk fell?" de Vere asked, seeing the subject of Cade's rebellion was distasteful.

"Yes, easily," said York. "The King's marriage, and John Somerset's failure in France did not make Suffolk very popular with the people; the doings at Bury St. Edmunds definitely made enemies of them. The disasters of last year, and the necessity for calling a parliament, caused him to see his danger. As you know, he made a good defence by blaming all on the King, but when he exempted himself and the Queen from the tax on exported wool, he turned the Commons unanimously against him.

"As early as November the rats started leaving the ship. Lumley, Bishop of Carlisle, retired from the

Treasury, and Bishop de Moleyns of Chichester gave up the Privy Seals; when Parliament met, Lord Cromwell led the attack on Suffolk, and was very nearly murdered by Sir William Taleboys, who got cast in £3000 damages for the attempt. This was followed by the death of de Moleyns who was lynched by Kyrielle's soldiers at Portsmouth on January 11th. Before he died, he let out something. I don't know exactly what, but enough to alarm Suffolk, who again defended himself before Parliament, when it met after Christmas (23rd Jan. 1450). I was disgusted at what he was reported to have said, bringing in not only his own war service, but his father's and brother's as well, most undignified, but I suppose wool-merchants think there is some special merit in dying in the service of their King and country.

"This time the Commons would have none of it, and asked that the rumours against him should be investigated; but, of course, the King and Council properly refused to act on rumour. Next day the Commons formulated vague charges, including, among other things, that he had fortified his castle of Wallingford as a base for a French invasion.

"This was just the kind of absurd charge the Council, who are nearly all his creatures, wanted. I am sure one of his own friends put them forward. To make his acquittal seem more reasonable, Archbishop Stafford gave up the Great Seal to Kemp, who was known to be on bad terms with Suffolk. You remember they each got the King to nominate their candidate to the See of London, and the matter had to go to the Pope? Tresham, the Speaker, kept me well informed of what was going on.

"I wrote and told him the first attack was hopeless, as soon as I saw the charges. At the end of the first week of February, he preferred a further lot of accusations, but

they were still far too vague, and more concerned with the King's dignity than the safety of the realm. The King, or rather the Queen for him, and the Council, looked into them and again dismissed them.

"The continual bad news from France and the inaction of the Government at home had by now roused the country, and in March a completely new set of charges was put forward. This time offences against the realm were alleged and being mostly true were easy to prove. The Council dared not stand by Suffolk any longer, because they feared for their own necks. The Queen wanted to bring Kyrielle's men up to London, but their behaviour in Hampshire had been so bad that the Council, remembering what had happened to de Moleyns, didn't dare to trust them. Suffolk was committed to the Tower on the 9th March, and a week later Kyrielle's army was shipped off to France. Now mark this: it was in October that this force was raised for fighting in Normandy, and it ought to have gone out in November. But Suffolk had begun to scent danger, so the command was not given to Shrewsbury, Buckingham, Salisbury, Beaumont the Constable, or even Roos—all proven men of birth and position—but to one of his own creatures, Kyrielle. All through the winter they were kept in Southampton, plundering the county at will, while you were being slowly driven out of France.

"When it was seen that not even the Queen could save Suffolk, the army was allowed to leave the country. That is why I said I thought that I shared with the Almighty the knowledge of why there was this six months' delay. Suffolk had intended to use this army against his enemies in England.

"The final act could not deceive a child. On the 17th March, after three days' running backwards and forwards,

Suffolk is brought before the High Court of Parliament; he denies all the charges as too horrible to answer, but throws himself on the King's mercy. The Chancellor thereupon produces from his purse the King's sentence to five years banishment, and to avoid the country by the 1st May, prefaced with the statement that the sentence was entirely the King's own without advice or counsel from the Lords, Commons, or Judges. With due respect to his Highness, whom God guard and protect, such despotic action is at least most unlike him; indeed, one would as soon expect to be charged and bitten in an open place by a barren ewe. That's all I can tell you."

"What about his death?" asked the blunt Bedford, "had you any knowledge of that?"

"I heard, of course," replied York, "that Winnington had captured his ship off Dover, and beheaded him on the 'St. Nicholas of the Tower' on the gunn'l of a boat, with a rusty sword."

De Vere was doing calculations on his fingers and occasionally shaking his head.

"I remember the Witch of the Eye told Lord Suffolk to beware of towers," said Hall. "He would never go near one at a siege, but you can't avoid your fate; what will be, must be."

"One would think you had lost your best friend, old sunny-face," said Bedford.

"In the midst of life we are in death," replied Hall, wiping a tear from his eye, and emptying his drinking-horn.

"I say, old comrade, if you are going to cry over the Duke of Suffolk, I wouldn't have any more of that Irish mull," said Bedford, refilling his own horn from the bowl on the table.

"Say no ill of the dead," said Hall solemnly, "we

shall all be dead soon, and the sooner the better for the less sins we'll have on our souls."

This cheerful philosophy caused Bedford to finish his horn at a gulp, sit back and close his eyes.

"It takes about fourteen days for a letter to get from London here, does it not?" de Vere asked suddenly.

"About that," replied York. "Why do you ask?"

"Well, sir," said de Vere, smiling, "seeing you are among your most devoted friends, any one of whom would stand by you to the death, I will be bold enough to say this. December 9th de Moleyns resigns, January 11th he is killed—33 days. Not that I suggest you had any hand in that. January 11th to February 7th, when Tresham forwards the first real charges—27 days. February 12th, when Suffolk is acquitted by the King, to March 9th, when he is committed, is 27 days. From March 17th, when he is banished, to 1st May when he has to void the kingdom, is 43 days—or is it 44? April, May and November, all the rest have 31—It takes two days to get from London to Dover, and four or five to fit out a squadron and possibly to find the High Admiral. The 'Nicholas of the Tower' left Dover, I believe, on the 27th April. Henry Holland, the new Duke of Exeter, is about to marry that sweet babe the Lady Ann, is he not? She always used to pull my hair at Rouen and take all the curl out of it."

"Sir Robert," said Cecily, "I don't know what you are talking about. Are you suggesting that his Grace had any hand in Lord Suffolk's murder?"

"I am not, madam," said de Vere very deliberately. "If he had, he wouldn't have allowed it to be done with a rusty sword on the gunn'l of a boat. He was always most particular about doing a thing in a seemly manner. He said he got it from your father, and I am sure that Earl Ralph, much as he would have approved the heading of

the Duke of Woolsacks, would never have tolerated it being done in so slovenly a way. Do you know they told me the sword was actually blunt and took six strokes to accomplish the good work. I am certain Earl Ralph would not have stood that."

"How do you know that, for Bedford just now asked how he died? I'm afraid the wine has gone to your head, and you're talking nonsense," said Cecily sharply.

"I am, and it has, or rather it has and I am," said Sir Robert. "That Irish spirit is far stronger than I thought. It has even put Bedford to sleep."

"It's done nothing of the sort," replied Sir John, opening his eyes with a start.

"Well we are all tired, so we'd better go to bed," said York. "One word to you, Robert; too much calculating will deprive you of your lovelocks, and perhaps your head with them. Put a curb on that tongue of yours, or it will run away with you into trouble. Good-night, my friends."

"I don't know how you can stand that idiot," said Cecily to her husband, as the door closed behind the three captains, "with his scented curls and impertinent chatter, he's more like a silly girl than a man. Takes after his wretched namesake, King Richard's cowardly favourite,¹ I should think."

"Oh, Robert's all right," he replied, "nor is he the fool he makes himself out. If you'd seen him at Pontoise, still fighting with half his face cut off you'd hardly compare him to the Duke of Ireland.² He wears his hair in that extravagant way to hide the scar."

¹ Robert de Vere, 9th Earl of Oxford, created by Richard II., Marquis of Dublin and Duke of Ireland. Ran away from his army at Witney. Died in exile, 1392.

² Idem.

CHAPTER XXI

THE WHITE KNIGHT

NEXT day the Duchess's nephew Richard arrived at the Castle, bringing the latest news from London. He had been created Earl of Warwick in right of his wife, who had succeeded her only brother the young Duke of Warwick.

He had already established his reputation as a soldier on the Scottish border, and in the private wars over their inheritance between his uncle and father, the Earls of Westmoreland and Salisbury.

After dinner the Duke retired with him and the three captains to Cecily's private apartments to talk matters over.

"Tell us how goes it in London?" York asked him.

"Ill, as all things do now," Warwick answered.

"Who and what is this Cade?" asked Cecily, "and what are his intentions?"

"No one quite seems to know," he answered. "Some say he was John Aylmer, a doctor who fled from Kent for the murder of a woman, others that he is what he professes to be, John Cade, a citizen of London, others that he's a bastard son or brother of your uncle, Mortimer. The Queen declares you sent him over from Ireland to raise rebellion in your own interest."

"That I certainly did not do," laughed York. "They make enough troubles of their own without requiring any help from me. What exactly does Cade want, anyhow?"

"About June he appeared in Kent," Warwick continued. "All the home counties were in a state of turmoil over the Suffolk business, and only a spark was needed to set them ablaze. The Queen supplied it. She sent Lord Say, the best hated man in Kent, to Dover to make inquiry into Suffolk's murder and revenge it on somebody or other, being too weak to punish the real instigators.

"She herself, meanwhile, was wrangling with the Parliament at Leicester over the raising of money. When the news of Formigny arrived, she gave way, and with a bad grace agreed to the resumption of crown grants, but made so many exemptions that there was precious little left to resume. Your grants were included in the exemptions."

"That's very gratifying," said York. "I would willingly surrender them all for a tenth of what I am owed, but go on."

"On Trinity Sunday (31st May) Cade raised his standard at Canterbury. It was at first thought to be a peasant rising like Wat Tyler's, but, as it spread to Sussex, it became definitely political. The Prior of Lewes and the Abbot of Battle both joined it. As soon as the news reached Leicester, the King dissolved Parliament and with the Queen hastened to London. By the time they got to Clerkenwell, Cade was entrenched at Blackheath. His men were very orderly and kept good discipline. Scales was ordered to collect what troops he could. There were plenty about, who had drifted back from Normandy, and Matthew Gough was put in charge of them. In the middle of June, the Queen sent word to Cade through the Lord Mayor, asking what he wanted. He forwarded what he called Articles of Complaints, and a Bill of Requests. He stated that the people had to be so

highly taxed because the Crown had been robbed by courtiers, that the King's debts were not paid; that all men were oppressed and robbed by court underlings; that justice was corrupt and the judges unpaid; that the great nobles sent their friends to Parliament without elections, and that France had been lost by treason. There followed a string of local grievances."

"I can't see much harm in these complaints," said York, "unless things have very much altered, they're painfully true."

"His requests were equally reasonable. The real resumption of Crown lands; the dismissal of all Suffolk's friends and relations; your own recall; reform of the tax gatherers, and the repeal of the Statute of Labourers."

"Is that all?" said de Vere. "I'm sure I should have wanted more than that."

"They also demanded the trial and punishment of four Kent officials, including Lord Say's son-in-law, Sir William Cromer."

"A rogue if ever there was one," said Hall.

"What did the Queen reply?" York asked.

"She and the King rode out against the rebels next day. He made a very poor figure, and could scarce support his demi-armour. The Queen certainly bore herself with dignity, and sits a horse well. On their approach, Cade withdrew his men to Sevenoaks. Sir Humphrey Stafford of Grafton and Sir William Stafford of Southwyk were sent in pursuit with the horse, but fell into an ambush and were both killed. The rebels then returned and added to their requests a demand for the heads of Lords Say and Dudeley and half a dozen more."

"I hope they got them," said de Vere. "If the half dozen were anything like the two lords, I'm sure they

richly deserved to lose them. This Cade must be a good fellow."

"Really, Robert," said Cecily. "How can you talk like that about a low impudent rebel. D'you take nothing seriously?"

"Oh, yes, quite a lot of things."

"And pray what?" she asked sharply.

"The perfume for my hair and the fit of my hose," he replied, stroking his shapely leg. "I assure you that during the siege of Caen, I couldn't get a drop of scent for over a month. It was only a gift of some from the Count de Clermont that enabled me to get over the shame of the surrender. Without it I really should have died. Do you know, this is the only pair of hose I have left unpatched?"

Cecily snorted, the others laughed.

"Having heard how easily Sir Robert's honour is healed," said the Duchess icily, "I hope he'll allow Richard to continue."

"The Queen took panic and ordered Say and Cromer to the Tower, but the soldiers who took them there plundered Dudeley's house on the way back."

"You must admit, Duchess, that was a good jest," said de Vere.

"I do nothing of the kind. I can see nothing humorous in soldierly misconduct," Cecily snapped. "I wish you'd not interrupt with your senseless chatter."

York hid a smile. De Vere's impertinence rather amused him. No one else ever dared to tease Cecily.

"Scales," continued Warwick, "told the Queen squarely that the Normandy men were so against Somerset, they were not to be trusted. The Lord Mayor offered the trained bands, but the Queen panicked again, and hustled the King off to Kenilworth, leaving London

open to the rebels. At the same time there were outbreaks in various places against the Queen's clergy. The Bishop of Salisbury was stoned to death by his tenants."

"I suppose you find that funny," said Cecily to de Vere.

"Not unless his name was Stephen," he replied ; "but don't let me interrupt Lord Warwick."

Cecily bit her lip.

Warwick went on unperturbed:

"Her Chancellor, Bishop Booth of Lichfield and her confessor, Lehart of Norwich, narrowly escaped the same fate. On the 4th June, Cade entered London like a king, dressed in poor Sir Humphrey's brass armour. He cut the ropes of the drawbridge on London Bridge and when he got to the Stone, struck it, saying: ' Now is Mortimer Lord of this City.' He returned to Southwark with his men for the night. Next day he came back and demanded the surrender of Lord Say, Cromer, and a fellow called Baillie, who some say, had run away with his wife. They were surrendered and taken to the Guild Hall, and after some sort of trial executed in various parts of the city, their heads being put up on London Bridge."

"D'you mean to say that Scales gave up a fellow peer to the mob?" asked Bedford.

"I do indeed. He told me himself he had express orders from the Queen, that on no account whatever was he to risk a collision with the rebels."

"I can't understand such conduct," said York. "When she could have had honourable terms she apparently wouldn't accept them, and then ran away, throwing her friends to the wolves."

"Next day Cade again returned to Southwark, after a bit of looting and blackmailing of unpopular aldermen. Some of the roughest of his followers remained behind.

They started pillaging and set a house on fire. That roused the whole city."

"Yes. That would," said York. "They fear fire more than the plague; the place is nothing but a bonfire awaiting a match."

"Scales sent out Gough, who made very short work of plunderers and soon had them running for their lives over London Bridge. Unfortunately, Cade thought he was being attacked, and a fearful battle took place on the bridge. Alderman Sutton and Gough were both killed—trampled to death in the mud."

"What a poor end for old Mat," said Bedford. "In many a fight we stood shoulder to shoulder. I'm sorry."

"I said that man would come to a bad end after the Le Mans business, now didn't I? He was always rash, but I'm sorry all the same, for he was a good fighter," said Hall."

"He deserved a better end," said de Vere. "He was one of the best, a staunch comrade, and a boon companion who could carry as much strong drink as any man I ever saw."

"That's hardly a virtue," said Cecily, "and I think you do him an injustice. I always found him a very civil sober man."

"If you put that on his tomb, he'd turn in it," answered de Vere.

"He was a good fighter, though a bit too fond of plunder," said York. "I'm sorry, but he shouldn't have been in England while Somerset was still in the field. To be trampled to death by a lot of lousy peasants was indeed a hard fortune. God rest his soul! How did it all end?"

"Waynflete, the King's favourite Bishop, went down with a wagon load of free pardons and a promise of

compliance with all the rebels demands. After a long talk, he got them to disperse. With the City of London against them, and the hay still uncut, Cade found it hard to keep them together. Cade, himself, broke the conditions of his pardon and remained in arms. Just as I left there was a rumour that he'd been taken and killed by John Eden, the new Sheriff of Kent. And now I've a very private message from my father," said Warwick, looking at the three captains.

"You can speak freely before all present. We're old comrades," said York.

"He told me to tell you to return at once, that the Queen had sent for Somerset, and intends to involve you in this rebellion. Your offer of assistance either in France or England has been refused, and Lord de l'Isle and Sir Thomas Stanley have been sent with orders for you to remain here and to arrest you, if you attempt to land in England."

"I've no wish to go, if I'm not wanted," replied York carelessly. "I've plenty to occupy me here, if only they'll send supplies."

"But you must go," said Cecily. "You can't allow them to blacken your name and plot behind your back."

"I'm sure I'm better here for a year or two. Somerset will hang himself as Suffolk did, if he's enough rope."

"Somerset will marry his son to his brother's little daughter and get himself declared heir; he'll then get rid of King Henry, and what'll become of us?" said Cecily.

"Impossible," said her husband, "he could never be so wicked. No one could hurt poor gentle Henry."

"You don't realise the overwhelming ambition of the Beauforts. We get it from old John o' Gaunt," returned Cecily. "I ought to know them better than you do,

considering my mother was one. I won't sit here and see you cheated out of the Crown."

"Henry may have a son," said York.

"Every one knows that he can never have any children," replied his wife. "Why the Queen almost told me so herself when she sponsored Margarite."

"True," said de Vere, "the fair Duchess is always right, but the Queen is young and comely."

"She's a Princess of France," said Cecily, "and so above suspicion."

"So was Queen Katherine, and her cousin the Duchess of Bedford was next door to one. I'm not the only good-looking young fellow about," said de Vere. "I hear your friend Lord Wiltshire¹ with his good looks and wit stands in high favour at Court. It's a pity I quarrelled with Somerset; if I hadn't he might have got me a job as a Queen's page, and some one might make me an Earl. I really would advise you to go and look after things, sir."

"For the mercy of Heaven, my lord, don't let Somerset lose England as he has France," said Bedford. "If this Cade can conquer England by the name of Mortimer, what cannot the real heir do?"

"But if I'm to be arrested the moment I land, what can I do? We're not yet secure from a rising of the natives, if I take all the soldiers away."

"Desmond would hold them long enough," said Cecily, "with me here."

"Not if Ormond stirred up trouble, and I can't bear to leave you here alone," replied York.

"Then why not make Ormond your deputy?" said Cecily.

¹ James Butler, eldest son of James, 4th Earl of Ormond. He was created Earl of Wiltshire by the Queen's favour in 1449.

"Impossible, he would never accept; you forget, he's more than once been Lieutenant," replied York.

"Then what about his son Wiltshire?" said de Vere, "that would keep him away from the Queen, anyhow."

"That's not a bad idea. By a lucky chance he's on his way here from the South; but still, the King having ordered my arrest if I leave, what's the use of my setting out?"

"I didn't care for this Sir James as he was then," said Bedford, "he never seemed to be where blows were thickest, always a bit afraid of getting his beauty spoiled."

"Sensible fellow! Your scarred old muzzle would never win a fair lady," said de Vere. "I always found him a very perfect knight—as far as the knees."

"What chance would the Duke have of getting through?" Cecily asked Warwick, turning her back to de Vere, who was not to be so easily suppressed.

"Somerset and the Queen are neither of them very astute," he intervened in all seriousness this time, "they'll expect you to return by Chester and Northampton. If I may make a suggestion, sir, tell Tresham to meet you there. They'll be watching his every movement. Land at Beaumaris, slip through Wales, where you'll be in your own country. Cross the Severn at Gloucester, and by that time you'll have enough men at your back to make your arrest impossible. You can put yourself right with the King before the Queen can stop you. She surrendered to Cade, she won't risk a battle with you. Somerset is now the best hated man in England; strike before he's the best feared."

"Really, Robert," said Cecily, "I didn't know you could talk sense for two minutes together."

"I can't as a rule," he replied. "As the Duke said last night, it takes the curl out of my hair."

"It's a big risk," said York. "I really think I ought to remain at my post here."

"But you can't, we'd all starve. With Somerset at the head of affairs, you'll certainly never receive a man or a groat from England. You have seen how poorly we live and how little plate we have left," she added, turning to her guests.

"On whom can I rely?" York asked his nephew, "if I do decide to go."

"Well, Buckingham is at Calais, and I fear we're too busy with Westmoreland and Percy to be of much help at the moment. Devon is fighting Bonville, and Shrewsbury the Berkeleys, if he's home. De Ruthyn, Beaumont and the rest of the Court Party will be against you, but they don't really amount to much. Norfolk told me to say he'll stand by you; so will Cromwell; Exeter's at sea. I, of course, will get what men I can from Warwick and Montacute. You can count on the City of London to a man. Once they're certain of your victory."

"Then it amounts to this; Norfolk, Cromwell and my own people against the King and the rest of the nobles of England. What of Oxford?"

"He's a bit of a fool," said de Vere, "but I should say he'd act with Norfolk, from what I know of him."

"You must not think that the rest will be against you," said Warwick, "it's only that most of them have a private war on at the moment. I'm sure the majority will back you against the Beauforts, as soon as they settle their differences."

"Your plan seems sound, de Vere," said York. "Will you come with me?"

"To hell if need be," said Bedford.

"Eh! that I will," said Hall. "I'd sooner die in your company than any man's."

"As it's my idea," said de Vere lightly, "I don't quite see how I can do otherwise, but for the love of God don't lose us in those damned Welsh mountains of yours; remember I'm not a goat."

"I'll send for Wiltshire at once. He can be here by noon to-morrow. Can I have the use of your ship?"

"With all my heart," said Bedford.

"We'll go and ready her for sea at once," said Hall.

"Why not use mine?" said Warwick.

"Any one who saw it, would know it was from here. Secrecy's vital. Farewell now, I hope we all meet to-morrow night. I've much to do," said York as he left them, for like all his race, his mind once made up he was quick to action.

CHAPTER XXII

THE WHITE KING ADVANCES

LORD WILTSHIRE readily undertook the Deputyship and promised his father's loyal co-operation, so that next evening, the Duke with a party of about twenty was able to go on board Bedford's little ship. She dropped down the river with the tide, passing, as she left Kingstown behind her, one of the King's ships making for Dublin.

They arrived at Beaumaris and were allowed to land without opposition, passing for what they were, gentlemen from France returning to their homes in the North of England.

The ship was left there to be ready to carry letters to Dublin and bring over the Duchess if all went well.

A week's hard riding brought them to Wigmore Castle, where York called up his tenants.

Lord Dudeley had been on the ship they had passed at the mouth of the Liffey, bearing orders for York to remain in Dublin. When Dudeley found the Duke had left Ireland, he quickly returned to England, and, hearing that a small party had gone south, made all speed to Gloucester by way of Chester.

On reaching there, he ordered the Abbot, Reginald Bowlers, to call up enough men to prevent York crossing the Severn. Bowlers was a partisan, having been Somerset's Treasurer of Normandy, and like most clerical politicians was extremely unpopular with his flock. When news came of York's approach, the Abbot

and Dudeley rode out to arrest him and his little party. De Vere and a dozen men-at-arms were some way in advance.

"You're up early," he remarked as he approached Dudeley.

"What are you doing here?" said the Abbot. "I thought you were in France."

"Just out for a ride with the Duke of York. He's behind with a couple of other men."

"We've important papers for him," said Dudeley.

"Lucky we met, you can give them him," de Vere turned his horse about and started to ride back.

"Stop, wait with us!" called Dudeley.

De Vere halted and made a sign to his men with his hand. Dudeley and the Abbot rode up each side of him.

"Why not go on," said de Vere, "the sun is hot; and the sooner your business is over, the sooner I can rid myself of this damned armour and get something to drink."

By this time de Vere's troopers had moved between these three and the Abbot's soldiers. As the Abbot laid a hand on de Vere's rein, his mule gave a violent kick and started off down the road almost unseating him; Dudeley's horse also gave a bound and followed. De Vere began to laugh as he cantered between them.

"I shouldn't draw rein, if I were you," he said, "I'm afraid those untrained oafs will ride over you if you do. I see one of them has already stuck his lance into your horse's quarters, my lord."

The leader of the troop had seen de Vere plant his steel shod toe into the belly of the Abbot's mule and, realising what was up, had given Dudeley's horse a prod from behind with his long lance.

Dudeley, looking back, saw the leading file had

lowered their lances, which appeared uncomfortably near his back; nor did he like the grin on their faces.

"You shall answer to the King for this," he growled.

"Since when has the King been your nurse?" said de Vere. "Are you afraid of falling off? A little canter will do you a lot of good, I assure you. Keep your heels down and your toes up. You're getting on fine!"

After going about a mile they came on the Duke of York.

"My lord," said de Vere, "these two gentlemen have papers from the King for you. They wished to await your coming, but I deemed that most improper, so persuaded them to come with all haste to you. I fear my Lord Dudeley is a little overheated."

The Abbot's men had remained where they were, for, seeing de Vere's smiling face and friendly greeting, they had suspected nothing when they observed the party canter down the road.

York, bowing to Dudeley and the Abbot, held out his hand for the papers.

"I'll give them you when you get to the city, my lord," said Dudeley.

"You'll give them me now at once," replied York.

"We left them in the Abbey," lied the Abbot quickly. "You're to return to Ireland at once."

"In that case, I needn't detain you longer," said York, and turning to Hall, "Conduct these two gentlemen to Wigmore, and see they need for nothing till I let you know the King's pleasure about them."

Hall deprived Dudeley of his sword and the Abbot of his mace, and led them to the side of the road as the Duke went on to Gloucester.

When he reached the Abbot's men, York rode forward.

"The Abbot requires you no more," he said to their

Captain. "He's gone to stay at Wigmore Castle for a few days. You can disperse your men as soon as they've had dinner at my expense."

The Captain saluted and made way for the Duke to pass. As they crossed the bridge, York turned to de Vere.

"Robert, how the devil did you do it?"

"Sheer blundering carelessness. The Abbot bumped the belly of his fat mule on my toe, and that clumsy fool Rudkin managed somehow to jab his lance into Dudeley's horse, so they wouldn't stop till they got to you."

Nothing of any consequence occurred till they were approaching St. Albans by the Watling Street, de Vere, as usual, some way in front.

He was stopped near the city by Lord Hoo, one of Suffolk's new lords, who asked him if he had seen anything of the Duke of York on the road.

"I left him at Dunstable with a force of about the same size as yours," he answered. "He told me he was going to Hatfield to-night, so if you want to see him you can catch him there. What is he doing out of Ireland? Has he been recalled to mend matters in France?"

"Indeed no, he's come out of Ireland against the King's order," said Hoo. "Will you take a message to my Lord Somerset if you're going to London?"

"Certainly, what is it?"

"That I've gone to meet the Duke of York at Hatfield; and, in case I miss him, to guard the eastern approaches of the city."

"You must write those instructions, if you please."

"I've no time for clerks and paper."

"I can't take them then, for I am under a solemn vow to the blessed Mary Magdalene never again to deliver an oral message. I once gave one to a friend's mistress he meant for his wife. There was the devil to pay; so I

vowed to the patron saint of all harlots never again to deliver a message by word of mouth."

"Devil take you," said Hoo. "You will find it at the Chekkars; I'll send it back."

De Vere waited till Hoo and his men were out of sight down the Hatfield road, then galloped back to tell York what had happened. The Duke asked him why he had told such an absurd story about a vow.

"Well, you see, I wanted to know what Hoo was going to do; if I had to deliver the message personally, I might have been asked a pack of embarrassing questions, and I've no wish to make myself unpopular. People might think I had purposely misled Lord Hoo. Somerset might want to know where I had been since we'd parted not on the best of terms.

"By the way, I heard another bit of news. I'm afraid I rather overshot the mark about Tresham. They watched him all right, and put de Ruthyn on his scent, who unfortunately knocked him on the head at Moulton yesterday morning early. I really felt quite bad about it. I liked the fellow very much.

"I think I'd better press on to London," continued de Vere, "and give Somerset time to move any troops out of your way; the ride may restore my appetite. I don't feel like eating just now. I hope chance allows of my going into this matter with friend Ruthyn some day. Till we meet, good-bye to you, my lord."

"Let my friends know I shall be at Westminster with the King to-night. I might need them," said York, waving his hand.

The Queen and her Court waited anxiously for news. As the Royal party were assembling in the privy chamber, before dinner, a page brought Somerset a letter.

"A man gave this to the porter for your Grace."

"Did he give no name?"

"No, your Grace."

Somerset opened it, and read.

"Good news at last, Madam," he said, turning to the Queen. "Hoo sends to say he nearly has York, who has turned off to Hatfield, believing the King to be at Eltham, and that he will lodge him in the Tower to-morrow; that's to say, if he submits quietly to arrest," and he exchanged a glance with the Queen and her confessor.

"I don't know why you're so against him," said the King. "He's always most kind to me. His buying Baynard's Castle from King's College, and not asking to be paid for his services in France got me out of a most difficult situation. I could never have managed to pay for the Chapel of my college at Cambridge otherwise."

"You know quite well he sent Cade over from Ireland to dethrone you," said the Queen.

"If you say so, my dear, I suppose it must be true, but I feel it hard to believe. He has such sweet children too."

Margarite bit her lip.

"The man's a rebel and must be treated as such," she replied. "Look what he's done. He leaves Ireland against your express orders and marches an army across England to surprise you at Eltham. Is that the action of a loyal subject?"

"I don't remember telling him not to come to England. I'm not at all sure he wouldn't be better here."

"Well, I told you I'd forbidden him," said the Queen, "which is the same thing."

"Oh, yes, my dear, of course," said the King, passing his hand over his forehead. "It's all very sad and con-

fusing. May the blessed Virgin direct us. I'm sure I do a lot for her."

Somerset acted immediately on Hoo's suggestion, sending orders for all available troops to go at once to guard the north-eastern roads leading into London.

The Royal dinner was long, and like all else at the palace badly served. For nearly three hours elaborately made dishes followed one another. They contained little and that little was of a poor order, since the King's credit was so low that the city merchants would hardly serve him except for cash, and of that he had barely any.

The tedious affair had almost drawn to a conclusion. Servitors, butlers, pages, carvers, etc., had withdrawn, when a sound of hurrying feet and a burst of many voices were heard in the outer hall.

"News from Hoo, no doubt," said the Queen.

"Yes indeed, may it be that he has resisted," said Bishop Booth. "God punishes ambition with death."

Somerset raised his glass.

"Well, here's short shrift to . . ."

"His Grace the Duke of York," announced Sir John Wenlock, the Chamberlain of the Household, as he flung open the doors at the end of the hall.

Somerset's goblet crashed to the table; the Queen turned pale.

The Duke, armed only with his jewelled dagger, bowed low to the King and Queen, and slowly walked up the hall.

"I claim my right of audience, Sire," he said. "Have I your leave, my liege lord, to speak?"

"Right welcome you are, Cousin Richard; they all told me you'd gone to Eltham to murder me," said the King, rising in his eagerness to greet him.

York made his way past the standing courtiers to kiss

the King's tiny hand and, as Henry resumed his seat, sat himself in the chair Somerset had been occupying without giving him a look.

"I'm so glad you are come alone with all love and courtesy," said the King, "welcome you are indeed, and how are your dear children? I'm so glad you're back. I've had a lot of difficulty with the workmen in your Earldom of Cambridge. They all want the same wages as the men I brought from France and Italy, and I really haven't the money to give them or I would. You'll be able to set it all right, I'm sure."

"Indeed I come in peace," said York, "and hope I shall be able to help you at Cambridge, but I fear I must discuss other and more important matters first."

"Oh, the Queen and the Archbishop and Suffolk, no, of course, he's dead; you know poor Suffolk was murdered, God rest his soul. The Queen told me you had done it, but I was sure you didn't."

"That was very kind of you, sir, and of you too, Madam," said York, bowing to the Queen. "Suffolk was dead almost before I knew you'd exiled him, sir."

"How dare you leave Ireland against my order," burst in the Queen, "and break in upon the King without leave or notice. I shall have you arrested at once."

"Madam," the Duke said to her very stonily, "it's not for you to give orders, as I told you once before. I've the right as a Duke to come to my King at all times without summons; and he only can order my arrest, which I'm certain he'll not do, now he sees I come in peace, and how foully I've been slandered behind my back."

"D'you dare to accuse me, sir?" said Margarite.

"No, madam," replied York coldly, "I've not been here to hear you, but from what His Highness

says it seems you have been saying a good deal about me."

"Now, Richard, you and Margarite must not quarrel," said the King hurriedly, "you must both help me. Now you are here, you must stop and everything will be all right. What's that noise I hear outside?" he added nervously. "The people have been so rude and unkind lately, I don't know why."

"It's the mob cheering at the news of York's return, sire; Scales has just sent word that even the soldiers in the Tower are cheering for him," replied Wenlock.

"Is that all? I'm glad, Richard, but I must go now," said Henry, rising.

The Queen seized this opportunity to draw aside Somerset who had come up behind her.

"Have him arrested at once," she whispered.

"He's a thousand men-at-arms in the courtyard."

"Imbecile," said Margarite, "can't you put a dagger into him?"

"Hardly, madam," replied Somerset, quite taken aback. "We leave such ways to the Scots."

"I have my Master Builder to see," continued Henry, as he went out, quite unconscious of the state of tension about him. Then remembering something he turned round, "To-morrow there is a council meeting here, so we will all meet. God being willing."

"Is it your desire I shall attend?" said York.

"Of course, my dear Richard, that's why you've come back. I'm so glad you came."

"I was sure you would be, sir," said York, "and at the council board I shall have to inquire who sent Lord Grey de Ruthyn to murder Sir William Tresham, the late Speaker of your honourable Commons, at Thorpe Close, and their reasons for doing so," he looked sternly at both

peers and prelates round the table, "and who ordered me to be prevented by force from coming here to you, sir."

"I'm indeed grieved to hear so good a man as Tresham is dead," said the King, a tear falling down his face, "but I must go. God rest his soul! Cause a thousand masses to be said for it, dear Cousin," and leaning on York's arm, the King passed down the hall for all men to see.

"Three months careful planning fallen as flat as a mined wall," muttered Somerset.

"Fools you were, ever to have let him in to the King," said the Queen. "What use are any of you, what have de l'Isle, Stanley, Dudeley, any of you been doing? Imbeciles all of you!" and turning her back on them the Queen left the hall.

CHAPTER XXIII

RED QUEEN CHECKS

YORK met the Council next day and laid formal charges against Somerset for his loss of Normandy, and against Lord Grey de Ruthyn for the murder of Tresham. These were postponed till Parliament, which had been summoned, should meet on November 6th, but the Council agreed that Lord Rivers should at once gather 3000 men at Plymouth for the relief of Guienne.

York, having sent for Cecily and established himself at Baynard's Castle, went down to the country with the Duke of Norfolk to see about the elections.

Parliament, when it met, was in his favour; so much so that Sir William Oldhall, his Chamberlain, who had been returned for Norfolk, was elected Speaker.

Norfolk and York came back to London on November 16th and once more laid their complaints against Somerset, who thwarted their endeavours to arrest him on December 1st by making his escape in Lord Devon's barge. The London mob took advantage of this disturbance to attack and plunder the houses of Lord Hoo and Thomas Tuddenham, the Keeper of the Great Wardrobe.

The Duke of York had no intention of giving his enemies the handle against him, that he was following in Gloucester's footsteps and raising the mob. As soon as he heard of the disturbance he called out his servants, and assisted the Mayor to restore order, hanging the ringleader from the Inn Sign of the Standard, which stood opposite the house of Thomas Wainstead, a mercer of Cheapside. The wife of this mercer had shortly before

given birth to a daughter who was destined to play a great part in the history of the Duke of York's family.¹

The charges against Somerset had not been dealt with when Parliament was adjourned on the 18th November for Christmas. To convince the King that he had had no hand in Cade's rebellion, York offered to hold a special assize in Kent to try the rebels, who either had not received a free pardon or had broken the terms of it. This offer was accepted and, before Parliament re-assembled on the 20th January, York had condemned and executed twenty-nine of the ringleaders. This assize was called in Kent the Harvest of Heads.

Meanwhile, the Queen's party were not idle. They induced Buckingham to resign the Governorship of Calais, on the promise to pay £19,000 owing to him, and appointed Somerset in his stead. This would give him a place of refuge in case of need, and the command of a few thousand regular troops if York and the Commons really pressed home their accusations.

When York had been received into the King's favour, Lord Dudeley and Bowlers, Abbot of Gloucester, were released. Bowlers, during the recess, was promoted to the Bishopric of Hereford in spite of the fact that he was accused of gross peculation whilst holding the treasurer-ship in Normandy.

About this time news arrived that the English forces, by gross mismanagement of their leader, Godfrey Short-hose, the Mayor of Bordeaux, had been defeated outside that city.

On the 20th January, the Speaker presented a petition to the King, praying that thirty persons might be banished from the Court for misconduct about his Royal person and elsewhere. Included among these were the

¹ Jane Shore.

Duke of Somerset, the Duchess of Suffolk, Bishop Booth, Lord Dudeley, Lord Hoo, Reginald Bowlers, Sir Daniel Say and Trevelyan. The last two and several more had appeared in Jack Cade's list. The King promised he would look into the matter and dismiss any one he found had misconducted himself.

After money had been voted to carry on the war and pay an army, which Lord Rivers had been ordered to raise, Parliament adjourned on the 29th March, to the 5th May.

While Rivers lay idle at Plymouth with 3000 men, Dunois and the brothers Bureau were invading Guienne with great success. All that York could get was £1000 which was sent out to pay the Fronsac troops, the only regular English garrison in Guienne. By the end of May, the French had captured the town of Bordeaux, but the fortress still held out.

Parliament, again in session, reflected the feeling of the country and became thoroughly restive. They demanded justice for Lady Tresham, the late Speaker's widow, and Thomas Young moved that the Duke of York should be declared the true heir to the throne. This was too much for Somerset, who clapped the author of this audacious suggestion in the Tower and dissolved Parliament.

He then endeavoured to win Norfolk over to his side by granting the disputed earldoms of Surrey and Warenne to his eldest son.

Lord Devon was besieging Lord Bonville in Taunton, and York was given the unpleasant task of peacemaker between them, in which he was temporarily successful.

The weakness of the home government was ruining our cause in Guienne. Hitherto we had generally been able to rely on the support of two out of the three of the

great southern families of Armagnac, Foix and Albret. Now, utterly disgruntled by the complete failure of the English Government to do anything, they all three joined the King of France. To meet this new and serious menace all Somerset did was to send out a hundred archers with Sir John Astley, the new Mayor of Bordeaux.

The people of Guienne, seeing they were deserted by England and left single-handed to face more or less a united France, proceeded to make the best terms they could for themselves. They agreed that, if no relief came from England by the 18th August, they would formally surrender and swear allegiance to the King of France. Of Lord River's army of 3000, which had cost the country £13,000, not a man was sent to Guienne in response to the appeal for aid.

On the appointed day, as there was no reply to the heralds' call for aid from the walls of Bordeaux, the castle opened its gates and again became part of France.

The lack of any action on the part of the Government naturally was a source of the greatest annoyance to York, who found himself checked and hampered at every turn. No sooner had he induced the King to give an order and had gone to carry it out, than it was cancelled. He did all in his power to gain his trust. At Cecily's suggestion he gave him an opportunity of exercising his prerogative of mercy, the only royal power that gave him any pleasure. During the royal progress in Kent, York caused some of the Cade rebels, whom he had condemned to death, to be on Blackheath, when the King rode across it on his return to London. They fell on their knees before him, begged for their lives to be spared, and were promptly pardoned and set free.

By this time the Queen and Somerset had almost ceased even pretending to consult the King, and, once

Parliament was prorogued, they proceeded more and more to exclude York from all part in the Government. The Duke's anger rose day by day as he saw the very men he accused of betraying the interests of their country promoted and rewarded without any inquiry whatever into their conduct. Somerset having at his back the army which should have been in Guienne, could afford to ignore his protest. It was in vain that the King called Buckingham and Salisbury to Kenilworth in September to effect a reconciliation between York and Somerset. Though the King, and perhaps even the Queen, did not realise it, the cause of enmity between these two men was the Crown of England;¹ both realised Henry would never have a child and might die any day.

York, through his mother, had a better right to the throne than even Henry and, if the Act of Henry IV. stood, a better claim than Somerset through his father.

Somerset could easily join the claims of his house, as Robert de Vere had suggested in Dublin Castle, by getting the required papal dispensation for the marriage of first cousins and uniting his brother's infant daughter, Margarine, to his handsome seventeen-year-old son, who already was beginning to rival the witty Lord Wiltshire with the Queen. As to the Act of Exclusion, what Parliament had done Parliament could undo.

So vital a cause for dissension, added to traits of character fundamentally opposed, made York's position an impossible one whilst his rival, the Queen's favourite, was first Minister of State. At last, utterly disgusted with their task, Richard and Cecily retired with their children to Ludlow.

¹ Somerset it will be remembered, was the male heir of John o' Gaunt and, except for his elder brother's infant daughter and the Act of Parliament which excluded Katherine Swinford's descendants from the throne, was the Lancastrian heir.

CHAPTER XXIV

WHITE KING AND RED QUEEN

CECILY was glad to get away from London. Her last baby, Thomas, was far from well, and she hoped the clean air from the Welsh mountains would put colour into his pale cheeks.

About Christmas time (1451) Robert de Vere arrived at Ludlow with all the Court news, and was much surprised at the Duke's ignorance of what was going on under the surface.

He seemed utterly unaware that the object of the King's progress during the summer through the southern and midland counties had been to weaken his influence with the Commons, nor did he know that the Queen was collecting an army at Coventry, not to fight the French, but for some secret purpose.

De Vere had a very good idea what the purpose was and it was because of this idea he had come to Ludlow.

"But why should the Queen be preparing an army against me?" asked York. "Has ever a man been more reasonable? I've only demanded that Somerset shall answer for the loss of Normandy and his conduct there. He may have a perfectly good answer; if so I, and the people of England, have a right to know it."

"It is Somerset, not the Queen," said Cecily. "Don't you see, he knows he has no answer to your charges, and even if he escapes with his life, he'll be disgraced before all England and can never hope to reign."

"He can never hope to, anyhow, with all your lusty children about, my dear," said York.

"They're young, and without you to protect them, he could easily usurp their birthright as Bolingbroke did your grandfather's," Cecily said.

"I think," said de Vere, "I'd keep a very sharp eye on our dear Queen, she's sly and overfond of money. You're dangerously rich. Don't forget Gloucester. If Somerset isn't aiming at the throne, why was Young flung into the Tower? What difference can it make to the Queen who reigns after Henry, if she has no children?"

De Vere was not the only friend who urged York to action. Messengers kept arriving from all parts of the country. Salisbury and Norfolk both sent letters warning him of his danger. Oldhall and several of the leading members of the Commons repeatedly urged him to come back to London, where he would be safe.

The first week in January, he heard that the Queen had actually called up a large force to meet at Coventry and that he was being openly accused of plotting treason.

Cecily tried incessantly to make her husband take action, but all she accomplished was to induce him to send the King a letter, in which he reiterated his loyalty and expressed his willingness to take the oath of allegiance anywhere and at any time.

The King's answer brought Lord Devon and his friend Sir Edward Broke to Ludlow.

"Now will you believe that they are planning your downfall?" said Cecily, after she had read the letter which ordered York to appear at Coventry.

"You must march on London," said Devon. "They'll receive you with open arms."

"They may, or again they may not," said York; "and, anyway, Coventry is between us and London."

"If the Queen moves against you, you'll have early news of it and can slip past her by the more westerly roads," said Broke. "They'll expect you to go by the Watling Street."

"I'm certain there's something in the wind," said de Vere, who had just returned from Coventry. "The Beaufort family seemed to be more confident than ever. Young Henry struts about like a peacock in pride, and never stops making sheep's eyes at the Queen. I wonder if we are to be blessed with an heir to the throne?"

"Don't be absurd," said Cecily seriously. "You really go too far at times, Sir Robert."

"He's quite right about the Beauforts," said Devon. "You can no longer look to the King; he becomes more feeble and more under the Queen's thumb every day. You should, for your own protection, raise enough men to get to London safely, or Somerset will be your undoing before you can move."

After an hour's argument York at last said, "I must first issue a proclamation to let the people know I'm a true man, and in arms only to save my country from evil counsellors before I take up arms."

After much labour and thought the following document was drawn up and sent out on the 3rd February to Shrewsbury and the surrounding towns:

1st "Right worshipful friends, I recommend me unto you, and I suppose it is well known unto you, as well by experience as by common language said and reported throughout all Christendom, what laud, what worship, honour, and manhood was ascribed of all Nations unto the people of this Realm, whilst the Kingdom's Sovereign

1st Richard, Duke of York, to the Citizens of Shrewsbury, A.D. 1452; upon his march towards London to overthrow the Duke of Somerset." (Formerly in the possession of Godolphin Edwards, Esq. Orig.)

Lord stood possessed of his Lordship in the realm of France, and Duchy of Normandy; and what derogation, loss of merchandize, lesion of honour and villany, is said and reported generally unto the English nation, for loss of the same; namely unto the Duke of Somerset, when he had the commandance and charge thereof: the which loss hath caused and encouraged the King's enemies for to conquer and get Gascony and Gyanne, and now daily they make their advance for to lay siege unto Calais, and to other places in the Marches there, for to apply them to their obeisance, and so for to come into the land with great puissance; to the final destruction thereof, if they might prevail, and to put the land in their subjection, which God defend. And on the other part it is to be supposed it is not unknown to you, how that, after my coming out of Ireland, I, as the King's true liege man, and servant, and ever shall be to my life's end, and for my true acquital, perceiving the inconvenience before rehearsed, advised his Royal Majesty of certain Articles concerning the weal and safeguard, as well of his most royal person, as the tranquillity and conversation of all this his realm: the which Advertisements, how be it that it was thought that they were full necessary, were laid apart, and to be of none effect, through the envy, malice, and untruth of the said Duke of Somerset; which for my truth, faith, and allegiance that I owe unto the King, and the good will and favour that I have to all the Realm, laboureth continually about the King's Highness for my undoing, and to corrupt my blood, and to disinherit me and my heirs, and such persons as be about me, without any desert or cause done or attempted on my part or theirs, I make our Lord Judge. Wherefore, worshipful Friends, to the intent that every man shall know my purpose, and desire for to declare me such as I am, I

signify unto you that with the help and supportation of Almighty God, and of our Lady, and of all the Company of Heaven, I, after long sufferance and delays, not my will or intent to displease my soverign Lord, seeing that the said Duke ever prevailleth and ruleth about the King's person, that by this means the land is likely to be destroyed, am fully concluded to proceed in all haste against him, with the help of my kinsmen and friends; in such wise, that it shall prove to promote ease, peace, tranquillity, and safeguard of all this land: and more, keeping me within the bounds of my liegance as it pertaineth to my duty, praying and exhorting you, to fortify, enforce, and assist me, and to come to me with all diligence, wheresoever I shall be, or draw, with as many goodly and likely men as ye may make to execute the intent abovesaid. Written under my signature at my Castle of Ludlow, the 3rd day of February. Furthermore, I pray you, that such strait appointment and ordinance be made, that the people which shall come in your fellowship, or be sent unto me by your agreement, be demeaned in such wise, by the way, that they do no offence, nor robbery, nor oppression, upon the people, in lesion of justice. Written as above, &c.

“Youre good Frend,

“R. YORK.

“To my right worshipful Friends, the Bailiffs, Burgesses, and Commons of the good Town of Shroesbury.”

The response was all they could have hoped for. Men flocked to York's standard. Lord Cobham promised to join him on the march. Salisbury sent, urging him to move north to York, where he and Lord Egremont would

meet him. The Duke of Norfolk and Lord Cromwell could join him either there or as he marched south.

Lord Devon pointed out that it would be very dangerous to march across the front of the enemy and place them between himself and London. He urged him to keep to the westward roads, for being expected on the Watling Street, by moving south on them, he might easily slip past the King's army and get to London first. Even if they were attacked, they could retire into his own county of Devonshire and at worst make his way from there to Ireland.

De Vere drew attention to the disadvantage of this plan, which would make it impossible for either Salisbury or Warwick to join him at all. The Court at Coventry could watch Warwick's every move and the royal army would be between Salisbury, in the north, and London. If the city did not open its gates to York, the Duke of Norfolk would also be unable to join him.

"Nor would I put too much faith in those fat cits," he added. "They prefer good dinners to hard knocks. You'll be in a deuced awkward position, if they don't open their gates."

"They're certain to," said York, a great optimist once roused into action. "Anyway, I could always go into Kent. Cade's men rose for a false Mortimer; will they not join a real one, who has the same objects and more chances of success?"

"May be, may be not," said de Vere. "I shouldn't care to rely on it, though. They're twenty-nine leaders short, you must remember. You didn't add to your popularity amongst the people of Kent last year, and allowed the King to get all the credit for your clemency."

"Of course, they'll join him," said Cecily, "as all

honest men will, who love their country and wish to see it freed from evil counsellors."

"Umm—yes," said de Vere doubtfully. "That's what those silly fellows the Duke headed or strung up thought. I hope you're right, but we shall be in a pretty position if you're wrong, with the King's army and the Thames between us and our friends."

"Cheer up, Robert," said York. "We've often taken on bigger odds in France and brought them off. You aren't dead yet."

"All very well for you and Lord Devon," replied de Vere, stroking his neck. "You're peers and will only be beheaded; they might very likely hang me. I should hate to be hanged, I've such a delicate skin and would look so nasty afterwards."

"If you feel like that you'd better stop behind," snapped Cecily.

"No good, I'm afraid. They'd only say I was your lover and as you're of royal blood, that's treason too."

"Well, if I don't march on London, where else shall I go?" asked York.

"That's just it," agreed Devon. "It's a choice of evils, but I'm all for keeping the roads to the west open."

"Why not march straight on Coventry," asked de Vere.

"I don't want a collision if I can help it. Once I'm in London with all Kent and Sussex at my back, even the Queen will see reason. With Somerset out of the way, we should be able to regain Guienne, for I hear they're heartily sick of French rule already, so I'm afraid it's a pike on London Bridge or Temple Bar for your lovelocks, Robert."

"All right, perhaps hanging is best after all," sighed de Vere. "A silly headsman might make a bad stroke and spoil them, which would be a pity."

Next day York took leave of Cecily. He managed to slip past the Queen and reach London without opposition, but his friends there were not strong enough to have the gates opened to him, and the last thing he wished to do was to attack the city. He, therefore, crossed the Thames at Kingston and marched into Kent, where few would join him. De Vere had been right; the people had not forgotten the Harvest of Heads.

On the 1st March, the King's army lay at Welling near Crayford, the Duke's at Dartford. They were about equal in numbers. With the King were Salisbury and Warwick, with a contingent of their retainers. They had had no choice but to join the royal army, or be declared traitors, in which case they would have been in no position to avoid arrest.

The poor King was worried out of his mind. He had never seen war, but still felt physically sick at the remembrance of those heads on London Bridge after Cade's rebellion, which he had at once ordered to be taken down. He was only too ready to listen to Salisbury and Warwick, both men of proven courage, who implored him to treat with York. William of Waynflete, the learned Bishop of Winchester, and Thomas Bouchier, Bishop of Ely, brother of Lord Bouchier, a man of ancient family with a reputation for integrity, also urged the same course. Somerset and the Queen, who alone opposed them, were soon over-ridden by numbers in Council so that the Bishop of Winchester carried the day.

Accompanied by the Earls of Warwick and Salisbury, Ely the Treasurer, Lord Beauchamp of Powyk, and Lord Sudeley, Waynflete was sent to Dartford to find out on what terms York would lay down his arms.

The sight of Salisbury and Warwick among the

envoys was a shock to the Yorkist party, who did not realise their true motives for being there.

In answer to the Bishop's questions, York simply stated his case; namely, that he was a loyal subject, but would not sit still and see himself and his country ruined by Somerset and other evil counsellors. If the King would consent to the trial of Somerset before his peers, he would at once disband his men and come bare-headed to his sovereign.

The envoys returned with this answer.

"Impossible," said the Queen. "I refuse to allow my servants to be sent to the Tower by any one. Tell this proud Duke to come here and beg for mercy before it's too late."

"Madam," said Waynflete, "d'you want civil war? Such a message will mean the death of thousands."

"Better the death of ten thousand than the shame of submitting to an insolent rebel," said Somerset.

"Even if you are one of them?" said Waynflete.

"Yes; a thousand times," answered Somerset. "I don't fear death; my conscience is clear as I will prove before all the world."

"Then everything is all right," said the King. "What are a few days in the Tower? You can have the use of my palace there, and prove York wrong. You ride off, my dear cousin, and place yourself under Lord Scales in the Tower, and I will see that York is convinced of your innocence; then we can all be friends again and no one will be killed. God and the Virgin be praised for answering my prayers. I shall give the most beautiful carved stone altar to her chapel at Eton that man ever conceived. Go and bring York to me."

"I'm sure your Highness has taken the wisest course," said Bouchier.

"I'm not in the least sure that all the troops could be relied on if such reasonable terms were refused," said the Constable, Lord Beaumont, and he looked very hard at Salisbury.

Somerset rose to speak, but the Queen signed to him to be silent.

"The King must rule in all things," she said, as she rose and signed to Somerset to follow her. "Before you go to the Tower, there are one or two matters I would speak to you on."

"What does she know?" whispered Warwick to his father, who only shook his head.

This sudden surrender of the Queen took the council completely by surprise. The Nevilles thought she must have guessed their intention to desert to the other side, while Booth, and the others accused by Parliament, feared that sudden panic had taken her and that she was about to throw them to their enemies as she had the Lords Say and Cromer.

York was delighted when he received the news that his terms had been accepted. He at once disbanded his men, sent them home by different roads, and went unarmed to the tent of the King, whom he found alone.

"Forsooth, Richard, you're a very naughty Duke," said the King, shaking his finger at him. "Your constantly quarrelling with Somerset causes me deep distress. You've disturbed the whole kingdom by your wilful conduct. The Queen will be very angry with me for sending Edmond to the Tower. Indeed, you must make friends."

"My liege lord," said York, kneeling at his feet. "It is not a personal matter between Somerset and myself, but I cannot stand idly by and see the country ruined, its honour betrayed, all the brightest jewels of your crown

lost, to satisfy one man's vile ambition. Nothing could have persuaded me, your Highness's most loyal subject, to take this desperate step, except the knowledge that it would have been anticipated either by some base-born fellow like Cade, or by some noble who might have aimed at the Crown itself.

"I implore you, sir, to dismiss these evil counsellors who strike at you through the Queen—Somerset, Booth, Roos, and Henry Beaufort, who waste your money, and do our country no service."

"Young Henry is a charming boy, but I fear is very irreverent at times. His speech often causes me pain, though every one else laughs at his jokes. But why do you always say such terrible things about Edmond and the good Bishop?"

"Because they're traitors. That they attack my life and honour is nothing to me, but I cannot stand by while to satisfy his ambition, Edmond, as marriage dower to his daughter, gives Calais to Burgundy. Remember, I am the only obstacle between him and the throne; remove me and see how long he leaves you in peaceful possession of it."

"Traitor, you lie, most foully do you lie!"

The curtain of the tent parted and disclosed Somerset fully armed with the Queen at his side.

"I thought you were in the Tower," said York.

"And so could slander me behind my back, you insolent rebel," said Somerset furiously.

"No, I'm glad you heard what I said," retorted York, "and you too, madam. I repeat, that I'm the only bulwark between you and this man's ambition; sweep me away and he will soon seize the throne for himself."

"I'll thrust your words down your throat with my dagger," shouted Somerset.

"Guards, guards!" shrieked the King, rightly fearing bloodshed and too feeble to even leave his chair.

Sir John Ramsden, with the guard, ran in at the King's call.

"Guard the Duke of York well," said the Queen. "He rides with us to London."

"Sire, this is treachery! I came with your safe conduct."

"Oh, don't hurt him, Sir John," said the King. "Let him go, I pray you."

"Do nothing of the sort, Sir John," said the Queen. "Henry, you don't know what you're talking about. You shall not let this traitor escape now I have him trapped."

The King looked at his lovely masterful wife with a puzzled expression, and seemed to crumple up in his big chair till he looked as if there was no body beneath his kingly robes.

"Make your peace with God," continued the Queen, turning to York. "I know how to deal with traitors."

"Not as well as your noble uncle, when he had the good Duke of Burgundy foully butchered, but I doubt if you'd find any Englishman to murder me in cold blood. I'm quite safe in Sir John's hands and shall also be before my peers. We have law and liberty in England, madam, as you'll find out." And, bowing to her with a mocking smile, he followed Ramsden from the tent.

CHAPTER XXV

LOSS OF A KNIGHT

NOT only were the Bishops and the Neviles furious at the flagrant breach of faith, but also the two members of the Government, Lord Beauchamp of Powyk and Lord Sudeley, who had been sent with them to make terms. The Council insisted that no harm should befall York. As the condition of his release, however, he was made to swear before the High Altar of St. Paul's that he would never again try to enforce his will on any one by arms, but settle all differences in the ordinary course of law.

Nothing daunted, he proceeded to do so. He laid before the council his old charges against Somerset, and added new ones; that he was at the bottom of the Fougères affair; that he had pocketed 72,000 francs intended for the sufferers of Maine; and had offered to surrender Calais to the Duke of Burgundy, if the Duke would marry his son to Somerset's daughter.

On the 7th April a general pardon was granted to all who had taken part in the Dartford rising. It included the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Devon, Lord Cromwell, Lord Percy, Lord Egremont (this Egremont was generally at war with the Salisbury Neviles), Winnington, who had murdered Suffolk and Thomas Young, the man who had proposed that York should be declared heir to the throne. Thus ended the Dartford rising without the loss of a single life.

The nobles of Guienne, having got tired of French

rule, sent over a deputation to implore England's help to drive them out. It arrived in London about the middle of May. Henry begged York to drop his charges and work for the good of the country with Somerset.

This he agreed to do, and the old Earl of Shrewsbury was ordered to raise a force for service in France. By the beginning of July, that game old man had got together about 3000 soldiers and 1000 sailors. The original objective of this force had been Calais, but in September it was altered to Guienne. Shrewsbury was made the King's Lieutenant of Aquitaine and landed at Medoc on the 17th October. As soon as he appeared before the city of Bordeaux, the gates were thrown open to him; an example followed by a great many more cities.

About this time England suffered a great loss in the death of John Stafford, Archbishop of Canterbury, who had been Chancellor for many years.¹ Thomas Kemp, the Archbishop of York, who had already followed him in the chancellorship, now succeeded him at Canterbury and the Queen's Chancellor, Booth, was translated to York.

York was able to get his friend, John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, into the government as Treasurer instead of Lord Beauchamp, but this was all he succeeded in doing, for, the moment Shrewsbury was seen to be making progress in France, Somerset and the Queen started plotting against York and excluding him more and more from the inner councils. Nor was he free from domestic trouble. The Welsh mountain air had done baby Thomas good, but on his return to Baynard's Castle with his mother, he sickened and died.

¹ He was not the son of the Earl of Stafford, as has generally been assumed, but the bastard son of Sir Humphrey Stafford of Southwyke near Trowbridge and Emma, who is buried in North Bradley Church, Wiltshire. He had raised himself by hard honest work and was respected by all parties.

The King and Queen spent the late autumn up to Christmas touring the country and removing any sheriff they thought favourable to York. Amongst these was Sir Walter Devereux, Sheriff of Hereford, who had been accused of High Treason, but York had managed to get him included in the Pardon of April. All this winter York was employed settling the private war between Lord de l'Isle, Shrewsbury's eldest son, and Lord Berkeley. By March he had persuaded them to join forces and fight the French instead of each other, and during that month a force of 3000 men under Lord de l'Isle, Lord de Moleyns, Lord Camoys and two of Lord Berkeley's sons went out as reinforcements for Shrewsbury.

In the Parliament, which met at Reading in March, the Government had a majority, and Thomas Thorpe of Essex, a private enemy of Lord Worcester, was elected Speaker. Though not daring to attack York openly, the Government moved a petition that all those who had taken part in the Dartford rising should be excluded from the benefits of the Act of Resumption.

This they followed up by accusing Oldhall, the late Speaker, of complicity in the Cade rebellion, and of treason at Dartford. The opposition responded by demanding the punishment of Lord Grey de Ruthyn for the murder of Speaker Tresham. During these squabbles the war with France was forgotten. York was got out of the way, by being sent to the north to settle the disputes between the two houses of Neville and Percy, which culminated in the battle of Stamford Bridge a year later.

Somerset obtained liberal grants from Parliament for the war, and an act enabling the King to raise 20,000 archers, to be kept at the expense of the counties for home service only.

The voting of large sums of money and the collecting

of them into the Treasury were two very different matters. The wool tax had already been raised to a height that utterly defeated its purpose.

The home service archers alone would cost £90,000, a sum amounting to three times the total Parliament had voted for all purposes. The sheriffs would naturally pay themselves before they sent any money to London and Somerset had made doubly sure no help could be sent to Guienne by obtaining £20,000 for his expenses as Governor of Calais.

The archers were never raised.

In the spring, Shrewsbury recaptured Fronsac, but in June Charles took the field with an almost united France behind him and again invaded Guienne.

Shrewsbury sent urgent requests for more troops and money. York, having settled, for the time being, the disputes between Devon and Bonville, induced the latter to join with Lord Say and raise 2000 men for Guienne.

Just before Parliament rose, £6000 was voted for this purpose, and the force was preparing to set out at the end of August to assist Shrewsbury. Unfortunately, just a month before—news travelled very slowly in those days—the gallant Old Dog had been defeated and killed.

On the 14th of July, when Charles had begun the siege of Castillon, the old Earl was nearing eighty. The brothers Bureau, the greatest engineers and gunners of their time, were in charge of operations. A camp was constructed on the east of the town and guns cunningly planted. Artillery, though it had been in use for a long time, had, up to now, been almost as destructive to its owners as to the enemy. The honour of being the first to employ it efficiently in field operations belongs to these brothers.

Shrewsbury, or Le Roi Talbot, as he is always called

in French history, at once advanced to the relief. Having dismounted his men, and drawn them up in line, he attacked and drove the French archers out of the Abbey which they had captured. After a short rest, he led his army forward against the camp, riding a pony himself, for, he said, his old legs would not carry him quick enough. The line swept forward confident of victory in spite of its inferior numbers. Into the ditch and up the rampart they swarmed, here to be met by a new and more deadly weapon than the old yew bow, which in the past had taken such heavy toll of the chivalry of France. For the first time in history, infantry came under well-directed enfilading artillery fire. For three hours they fought; Talbot's pony was killed by a cannon ball, his leg was broken, but even then, refusing to give ground, he continued to fight on one leg.

The effect of the cannon balls was appalling, especially on the flanks, where the Constable Richmond delivered an attack with the flower of Brittany. Soon all was over; the shattered line crumpled and broke. Stamped into the mud lay Le Roi Talbot, the gallant old war dog; his son Lord de l'Isle, lay side by side with his old enemy young James Berkeley; while Lord de Moleyns and Thomas Berkeley, rather than give ground, fell into the enemy's hands. True to his breed, a bastard son of old Talbot died astride his father's body.

Thus in glorious defeat ended the Hundred Years War.

CHAPTER XXVI

RED PAWN CHECKS

EVEN before the Dartford rising the King's health had been steadily declining and after that his mind became weaker every day. The Queen did her best to conceal the facts from the public, but even before Parliament rose the precarious state of the King's health was known. In the beginning of August he was carried off by the Queen and a few attendants to Clarendon.

York was deeply moved by the death of Shrewsbury, his old comrade in arms. He blamed himself for not insisting that Lord Say's army should be sent out in time. Cecily urged in vain that he had done his best, and that it was in no way his fault, but he was not to be comforted. After the adjourning of Parliament in July, the Duke had retired to Wigmore, there being, apparently, no employment for him, in spite of his many successes at peace-making between the warring barons. The result of this neglect on the part of the Government was the battle of Stamford Bridge, in August, between the Percies and Nevilles.

During this winter York learnt what was to him an almost incredible piece of news; namely, that the King had been officially informed by Richard Tunstal, Gentleman Usher to the Queen, that she was with child. This news was brought to him by de Vere.

"Silence, Robert," said York. "You're always talking nonsense about the Queen. It's impossible, it can't be true."

"That's what you said before, but you'll see that I'm right this time. I know the usual grant of forty marks a year for announcing the fact has passed the Privy Seal. Bishop Booth told me so himself. Lucky fellow, Tunstal. Such things never come my way."

"Oh! It's only a move by Somerset to make the Queen more popular with the people. They don't care for barren women," said York.

"The last glance I had of her Highness, before she left for Clarendon, makes me think there are certain solid grounds for the rumour. They say the child is expected in October."

"Well, perhaps it's a good thing," said York wearily. "It would keep her mind off affairs of State. A woman is always pleasanter after she's had a child. She'll be less jealous of you, my dear Cecily. She's always envied your fine brood."

"How does Somerset take all this?" said Salisbury, who with his son Warwick happened to be staying at Wigmore. "I hardly think he'll be best pleased. As you know, he's always cherished his bastard claim to Henry IV.'s throne."

"He seems to bear up quite nicely about it," said de Vere.

"I expect he'd rather have the devil King than me," said York.

"Certainly. Those two would get on like a pair of turtle-doves," replied Warwick.

"I don't suppose he ever really believed that his bastard claim would be allowed by the nation. Well, I'm glad I know now where I stand. It's ill work waiting for dead men's shoes," said York.

"You're right there," said Salisbury. "I only hope that the child will not take after its father, but will be a man like Prince Hal."

"Take after his father!" said Cecily, who had been listening in silence. "How stupid and wooden-headed you men are! Can't you see the whole idea? Everything fits in like the stones of a Roman pavement. Somerset knew his claim was barred, so is defrauding you out of your rights with his own bastard by the Queen."

"D'you really think he is the father?" asked York, in surprise.

"Who else? You don't think it's Henry, do you?"

"From what I've seen," said de Vere, "I think the child is more likely to take after the son than the father."

"What d'you mean by that?" said Cecily sharply. She did not like de Vere. She had a feeling in the back of her mind that he made fun of her.

"Master Henry Beaufort's a very personable young gentleman, and, I think, far more likely to take a young maid's fancy than his old father, who's getting fat and fifty."

"The Queen isn't a young maid, she's twenty-five and has been married ten years."

"She may still have been a maid for all that till just lately," said de Vere. "Henry never struck me as a ravisher of maidens, nor have I ever heard maid or matron boast of his favour before or since he married; and Kings have so many opportunities denied to other poor mortals."

"What makes you think it will be Dorset's¹ child?" asked York.

"I said a year ago he was making sheep's eyes at the Queen and running after her like a dog; now he struts about like a peacock in pride, or a dog with two tails. The puppy's quite insufferable. Since May the Queen

¹ Henry Beaufort had come Marquis of Dorset.

has been very distant to him in public, but he's always at her side."

"God knows," said Salisbury. "I have no reason to like the woman, but I find it hard to believe her a whore."

"I, too," said York. "All the years she's been here, she's borne herself as a Queen should."

"Can't you see it," said Cecily impatiently. "It's as plain as a pikestaff. All last year you ruled the Council, and, while you worked for peace at home and vigorous prosecution of the war, the Queen was going round the country making sure of the elections, displacing any sheriffs who were favourable to you. The moment she was sure of a majority, she gets with child. If the child's to be born in October that would be about January. She'd not be sure till March. You were able to dispatch de l'Isle and the Berkleys in February."

"As soon as Parliament opened, Somerset got them to grant 20,000 archers to be raised and trained in case of civil war. What likelihood of civil war was there, except for the fact that you might resist this bastard claim? In May being certain of the Queen's condition, he attacks you and your friends and sends Oldhall and Cobham to the Tower. Not being able to get his 20,000 country archers, he keeps Say and Bonville at home. Bonville, you may be sure, is keeping most of these men up his sleeve to attack Devon as opportunity offers. Why weren't you, or some great lord, allowed to command this army, and why weren't you sent to settle the differences between the Percies and ourselves? Because Somerset wants every one weak but himself. What matters that Guienne is lost and Shrewsbury's butchered, so long as a Beaufort rules?"

Cecily paused for breath.

"But, my dear," said York quietly, "this may all be

very true, but how could Somerset induce the Queen to prostitute herself to his ambition?"

"I think I can throw some light on that," said de Vere. "You know the clergy round her—Kemp has always been a Beaufort tool; Lehart, her confessor, as crafty a rogue as ever graced a gibbet; and Booth, as corrupt a knave as ever wore a tonsure or forged a will—can't you see one or all of them going to the Queen and explaining that an heir was absolutely necessary for the salvation of the peace of the country, and the only way to curb you, sir, and your supposed designs on the throne. Can't you see them holding up the sad fate of the widows of the last two kings? Can't you hear that smooth-voiced, whited sepulchre, Kemp, 'My dearest Madam and sweet daughter in God, as his Highness is unable to perform his duty and procure the children, so necessary for the peace and safety of this realm, it is meet and right that a regent should be called upon, as in the case when it pleases God to deprive a King of his power to carry out his other functions. I, your father in God, and your confessor the pious Bishop of Norwich, will give you a special indulgence and plenary absolution for this act, which is for the good of your country.' " Here de Vere changed his voice to imitate Lehart. "It is meet and right so to do." Then again to Kemp's. "Neither of you will be doing any harm to any one. You'll raise his Highness in the eyes of his people. You'll fulfil his greatest desire. In his present state of health it will be easy to convince his Highness that his prayers have been answered. Choose now this handsome and illustrious youth, Henry Beaufort, who is lusty as a young ram, to assist in this godly undertaking. Ensure that the throne of England will descend in the true line of Lancaster and remain for ever in the seed of that paladin of all domestic virtues, the

good and uxorious John of Gaunt. Then, when the King dies—may God long delay the hour!—you can enter the holy state of matrimony with this illustrious youth and, with the advice of his equally illustrious and virtuous father, live, love, and reign for ever and ever, world without end. Amen.”

De Vere’s mimicry of the Archbishop was so perfect that, in spite of its irreverence, the whole company, including Cecily, burst out laughing.

“Really, Robert,” said Cecily when she recovered her breath, “you ought to be ashamed of yourself. How dare you utter such blasphemy. You’re worse than a court jester.”

“Then why d’you laugh and encourage me? It’s very wrong. I really expected better things of you, I really did. I’m shocked.”

“Silence, Robert,” said Salisbury, wiping his eyes; “this is no laughing matter.”

“So I perceive—and have said, my lord,” retorted de Vere with mock gravity.

“What are you going to do about it?” asked Cecily.

“What can I?” replied York. “The law of England is clear. Not even the King could bastardise this child, whoever it’s by.”

“I should have suspected Wiltshire if he’d been here,” said Salisbury. “He was a great favourite before he returned to Ireland.”

“I wonder if you’re right about the Queen,” said York. “I can’t bring myself to believe she could so far forget her position and honour.”

“I’m afraid you know very little of women, Richard,” said Cecily. “Margarite was a woman before she was a queen. Every woman worthy of the name wants a child of her own. Henry can’t be a very satisfying lover and

some of these French women lack our high sense of chastity. Look at Queen Katherine taking up with this dreadful Tudor lackey, and Jacqueline with Wodeville, the moment their husbands were dead."

"When I said that some time ago you reproved me," said de Vere, adding dreamily, "All women are harlots at heart."

"How dare you?" said Cecily. "I won't have you say such things in front of me."

"If you'll move your chair, I'll stand behind you," said Robert, with that disarming smile of his.

"Something must be done," said Cecily. "Have you no ambition, Richard?"

"No. I only want to be left in peace to do the best I can for my country. Why will no one believe I don't want the crown. I'm delighted to be quit of this fatal legacy?"

"I can't understand you, uncle," said Warwick. "If I'd but half your claim, I should have worn the crown of England long ago, and of France too."

"My dear nephew, sovereign power's far more attractive to look at than to handle. Off and on, I've exercised it for ten years and more. What has it brought me? Nothing but worry, debt and enemies."

"That's because you were not supreme. If you'd been King you could have commanded all the power of England. You were hampered by base-born men like Suffolk and these Beauforts."

"Don't forget your grandmother was one," said Salisbury.

"She took after her great father," replied Warwick; "but the men after their mother."

"I must say I'm sorry," said Salisbury, "that I shall not see a Nevile on the throne of England."

"I'm not; though I'm certain it will never have so suitable an occupant as you, my dear," said York, bowing to his wife.

"Or yourself, sir," said Warwick. "England will never recover France while this milksop is King."

"That's treason," said York, "and I'll not listen to it. I've sworn allegiance to Henry and by God! I'll keep it. Let me hear no more of such nonsense, for it's both foolish and dangerous."

"If there's no improvement in the King's health a regent must be appointed soon," said Salisbury, who had been a little frightened by his son's wild talk. "From all I hear the King's incapable of transacting any business."

"Well, let the Queen be Regent, then I can live in peace and enjoy a quiet life with my children. They hardly know me by sight. How many are there, my love? Is it seven or eight?" he added, laughing.

"Neither the lords or commons," suggested Warwick, "would stand a foreigner as regent."

"If there has to be a regent, you are the only man to fill the place," said Salisbury.

"If you refuse, I'll make my father here take it," said Warwick.

"Oh, you would, would you?" said Salisbury, smiling. "Very kind of you! And what d'you think Buckingham, Norfolk, and Exeter would say?"

"And Somerset and your dear uncle of Westmoreland," put in de Vere. "You see, sir, fate is against your desires."

"Yes, that is so," joined in Salisbury. "With the possible exception of Somerset, we should all accept and welcome you. Any other amongst us would be torn to pieces by the rest in no time."

"Well," said York, with a sigh, "aren't we crossing

the stream before we reach it? The child isn't born, and may never be; the King is not incapable yet."

"Of doing what his wife tells him," added de Vere.

On the 13th October the stream was reached, Margarite was delivered at Windsor of a fine healthy boy, and Henry was incapable of understanding his wife's command that he should acknowledge her son in due and ancient form.

They had placed the King on his great chair of State and then, when the baby was brought to him, he sat like a half-filled sack and looked at it with unseeing eyes. It was placed in his arms; he let it drop on his knees and it would have fallen to the floor if Wenlock had not caught it. Nothing that was said or done aroused any response from him. His mind was completely blank.

CHAPTER XXVII

WHITE CHECKS

THE Duke of Buckingham had been present at this painful scene. He went to Somerset and insisted that the Grand Council should be called at once.

Somerset complied, but left out the Duke of York and several of his friends; a high-handed action which the majority refused to sanction. There was no doubt that in the event of the King's death, which might occur at any moment, people would insist on York's being made Protector, if not Regent. He had very powerful friends on the Council. His moderation had rallied to his side men like Norfolk, the Bouchiers, and Buckingham. These and others insisted that a full Council should be summoned which should include the Yorkists.

On November 11th the Parliament, which reassembled at Reading after the adjournment in July, was in a very different mood. They were furious about the defeat of Shrewsbury and the final loss of Guienne, which had formally submitted to the King of France a week after the birth of the Prince (19th October, 1453).

Somerset took alarm and adjourned the House till February to meet in London. The Council, when it assembled in London on the 21st November, was equally against Somerset, and he was sent to the Tower on an indictment against him exhibited by the Duke of Norfolk.

The Queen's party forbore to interfere, as the mob were now so hostile that Somerset's life would scarcely have been safe anywhere else.

York became automatically and by general consent head of the Government. On the 13th February, when York, as the King's Lieutenant, opened Parliament, the Speaker was in gaol. Sure of Somerset's triumph, Speaker Thorpe had in September seized a quantity of arms and armour deposited by York with his kinsman, Thomas Bourchier, at the Bishop's London house in Ely Place. York had instantly proceeded against him before the Court of the King's Bench and obtained £2000 damages, besides an order that Thorpe should remain in the Fleet prison till he had paid.

The Commons protested. York explained that no one respected their rights and privileges more than he did, but that the House was not sitting when Thorpe committed the trespass, and that he had done so acting as a private individual not as Speaker. York further asked for the opinion of the Judges as to whether a breach of privilege had been committed. The Lord Chief Justice, John Fortescue, and his brethren shirked the question, saying that the matter was too high for them, as Parliament made and unmade law, and its own privileges. This satisfied the Commons, who then elected Thomas Charlton, Speaker.

The old Government party were still strong enough to put up a fight, and attempted to proceed with their attack on Lord Cobham, begun the year before at Reading. They also indicted Devon for his general lawless behaviour in the west, and York, who had on more than one occasion been sent to impose peace between him and his neighbour, Lord Bonville, did not move in the matter. This infuriated the fiery Earl, who considered that, having stood by his side at Dartford, York had now shamefully deserted him.

York was in a very difficult position. It appeared

inevitable that for the next sixteen years or so he would be King in all but name, and as such it was most inadvisable that he should interfere with the bringing to justice of a notorious law-breaker, merely because he had been his friend in his own law-breaking days.

One of the first acts of the new government was to pass the Patent creating Prince Edward, as the child was called, Prince of Wales, and settling on him the revenues of Cornwall and Lancaster.

As York explained to Cecily, it was better to have a united peaceful England than one torn to pieces by civil war, even though it were under a bastard. He hoped by his ready acknowledgment of the Prince to gain the Queen's confidence, and to convince her that he would pay no heed to the wild talk that this child had been brought into the palace and was not hers at all. For the same reason he did not press on the trial of Somerset.

Cecily warned him that the Queen would never be reconciled.

Though York was all out for peace, the Commons were not. They attacked more members of the late government, and refused to vote another penny till the Lord Chancellor, Kemp, had produced proper accounts of how the last subsidy had been spent.

This was too much for the old man. After wrestling with his books and tallies for two days, he had a fit and died on the 22nd March. His death brought matters to a head.

Kemp had occupied the two highest positions in the State. He had not only been Lord Chancellor, but also Archbishop of Canterbury. Only the King in person could deliver the Great Seal or appoint an Archbishop. The Lords, therefore, sent down twelve of their number to interview the King at Windsor. The deputation saw

him three times, but could get no answer of any sort from him. They reported that they had found the King's mind a complete blank, that he was quite incapable of acting and that he had even to be carried and fed like a child.

York was then unanimously elected Protector with the same powers as Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, had exercised during the King's minority. He displaced none of the old ministers, except Somerset, from whom he took the Governorship of Calais. He made Salisbury Lord Chancellor, an unusual appointment for a layman. Thomas Bourchier became Archbishop of Canterbury, and Warwick a member of the Council.

York was determined to have peace and order both on land and sea. His son-in-law, the Duke of Exeter, had proved himself an incapable High Admiral, so he deprived him of the office and placed it in Commission. The board, drawn from all parties, consisted of the Earls of Salisbury, Worcester, Oxford, the new Earl of Shrewsbury, Wiltshire, who the year before had succeeded his father in the Earldom of Ormond, and Lord Stourton, one of the Queen's favourites. They were instructed to keep the sea free of all pirates and truce-breakers.

Wiltshire, for he still seemed best known by this title, was also promoted from Lord Deputy to Lieutenant of Ireland.

On the 17th April, 1454, Parliament was dissolved.

The King's illness was thought to be permanent, and his household was cut down "to the very modest fellowship of 428 souls, both great and small," a number which did not include wives and children. There were five doctors. The number of horses was reduced from 108 to 37.

Any saving which it had been hoped would be

effected by this reduction was neutralised by the household which the Queen insisted on having for the Prince of Wales, and which York was too anxious for peace and good will to oppose.

In the autumn the Duke of Exeter joined with the Percies in stirring up trouble to avenge their defeat at Stamford Bridge. York had no intention of tolerating lawlessness in any form, so he marched a large force up north. Exeter fled to sanctuary, but, under the new law, was summoned to appear before the Protector or forfeit all his property. He came and was formally imprisoned in Pontefract Castle.

York then went to Calais, of which he was now Constable, and set himself to strengthen the defences and reinforce the garrison.

King James of Scotland, trying as usual to see what he could get out of England's troubled waters, wrote to Somerset in the Tower offering his assistance, as he had done to York two years before. Somerset, like York, honourably refused this offer of foreign aid.

The last day of the year 1454, while Parliament were discussing York's requirements for the adequate defence of Calais, a fanfare of trumpets was heard. The King entered the chamber with the Queen and ordered the Regency to terminate, as he had now recovered his faculties.

Every one was taken by complete surprise. York, raising no difficulties, at once sent for his commission, which he handed back to the King.

The Queen, now she had the power, wasted no time. She released Somerset on bail and restored him his Constablership of Calais. On the 4th March he was fully discharged. On the 7th Salisbury was ordered to deliver the Great Seal to Archbishop Bourchier. The same day,

Warwick was dismissed from the Council, Wiltshire made Treasurer, and Exeter released from Pontefract.

The Duke opposed none of these orders but, having been deprived of all his offices, quietly retired to his Yorkshire homes in company with Salisbury and Warwick. The Queen's next act was to summon a great Council to meet at Leicester.

York, Salisbury and Warwick were pointedly left out.

On his release Somerset, realising there was no room for himself and York in the same Kingdom, at once began to play on the Queen's fears. The Council at Leicester had been his idea; he, too, had prompted her to order that the peers summoned to it should come with all retainers fully armed for the "surette" of the King's person. The Yorkists were naturally left out, but sides were not yet sufficiently clear cut to prevent their getting news of what was on foot.

Devon was now as strongly opposed to York as he had formerly been for him, but the balance was adjusted by Bonville's coming over; these two western nobles could never be on the same side. Buckingham and the Bouchiers strove for peace. Wiltshire, who, as his third wife, had married Somerset's daughter, was now definitely on his father-in-law's side.

These were anxious days for Cecily at Middleham Castle, where the Yorkist party were gathered.

The Duke of Norfolk wrote pledging his support. If York were crushed, he knew he would be next. Warwick had taken the precaution to raise his forces before he came north, and urged an immediate march on London.

Knowing her husband's sense of honour, Cecily had obtained from the Pope, through Abbot Whethamstead of St. Albans, a release for him from the oath he had sworn at St. Paul's after Dartford.

York and Salisbury were for waiting, being unwilling to draw the sword unless their lives depended on it. Warwick rightly urged that, once the Council were assembled at Leicester, many of the lesser lords would be forced to march with the Queen whether they wished to or not.

The question whether it were better to get in the first move and thus become the aggressor, or to wait till they were attacked, was debated long into the night. The danger of waiting was increased by the proximity of the Percies and Raby Nevilles in their rear.

Between Yorkshire and London, the people as a whole were on the Yorkist side. The Queen's party drew most of its strength from Lancaster, North Wales, and the south-western counties. Warwick at last carried the day, and York acted with his usual swiftness when once the decision was taken.

Gathering all the men they could at short notice, they left Yorkshire and marched rapidly on Cambridge, Warwick's men meeting them on the way. They hoped the Duke of Norfolk would also join them on the march.

Cecily waved a brave farewell as they set out on this high venture. She could not go with them as she would have wished, for her young children needed her.

All through May her eyes were turned to the south, anxiously watching for a swift-riding messenger. She had heard only that Norfolk had failed to join up at Cambridge on the twentieth, but that, urged on by Warwick, York was pressing forward in hopes of intercepting the King before he reached Leicester.

Each day she would climb to the top of the great keep and look down the road. One evening as the sun was sinking over the green heather of the moors, she saw it gleam on something bright; surely it must be armour;

there was no water just there. The sun sank before she could be sure. She strained her eyes as the twilight fell. How she longed to order a horse and gallop out, but both duty and dignity forbade. She had few men in the castle, and were the party hostile she might be captured. Whatever the news she must keep her head.

At last she saw a single rider. How slowly he was coming; surely glad tidings came hot-foot. She went down to the great hall and sat in her chair of state. She felt stronger there, surrounded by the armorial bearings of her ancestors which decorated the ceiling and walls. Her three elder sons joined her, Edward, Earl of March, Edmond, Earl of Rutland and Cork, and George, aged five.

Would that horseman never arrive? Her heart was beating so fast it choked her. At last she heard the challenge and the rattle of the horse walking over the bridge into the yard. She gripped the arms of her chair till her knuckles went white.

Would they never come?

She heard the sound of an armoured man falling on the pavement. Then some one calling for wine. Holy Mother of God! Calling for wine, when she was almost dead with anxiety.

"Go and bring that laggard wastrel here," she said very quietly to Edward, "and tell him he gets no wine till he's delivered his message."

Edward soon returned with the man. He was covered thick with the black dust of the moors, his head was bandaged and he walked with a limp.

"Come, sir," said Cecily sharply. "What's your news?"

"My dear Duchess, that's just what I've come hundreds of infernal hot dusty miles to tell you, only this young

ruffian gave me dog's abuse. I'd have boxed his ear were I not so confoundedly stiff."

Edward put his hand to his dagger. He was not used to being thus spoken to. Cecily stared at the man. Could this bedraggled creature be the dandy, Robert de Vere? Had any one else that slow, lazy voice?

"Robert, is that you?" she said. "Tell me quick, how's the Duke?"

"That's just what I was going to do when I had had a drink," he answered, seating himself in the duke's chair beside her. "I'm not surprised you didn't recognise me. They've made a shocking mess of my appearance."

"Tell me the news, you fool! Does the Duke live?" Was this the idiot's idea of breaking bad news to her?

"I see no particular reason for you to call me a fool," said de Vere. "I was telling you how I came to be in this shocking state, when you interrupted me. You see, I got hit on the head and——"

"Your news, man, your news. Who cares a frayed bow-string what happened to you?"

"I, for one, care a very great deal what happens to me, and my mouth and throat are as dry as the gate of hell."

De Vere, in spite of his wounds, had ridden day and night to bring her news. He resented Cecily's message, which had lost nothing of its sharpness in the telling by Edward, and he had every intention of punishing her for it; besides, he never could resist teasing her.

"Go fetch him some wine quickly," said Cecily, "then we shall get some sense out of him."

"Right as you always are," said de Vere, smiling. "The Duke is well and victorious."

"Thanks be to God," said Cecily, and two great tears rolled down her cheeks.

De Vere put his hand on hers.

"Forgive me," he said, "I didn't mean to be so cruel. Young Edward's message made me angry."

He took the cup Edmond had brought him and buried his face in it, till he saw out of the corner of his eye that Cecily had recovered her composure.

"As you know, that silly old man, Norfolk, didn't get out of bed in time to join us at Cambridge, so we pressed on. From Ware the Duke sent the Archbishop in London a very pretty letter, affirming his loyalty to the King and asking what all the fuss was about, whom the King feared and who'd put him up to it, anyhow; that he and Salisbury would provide any security the King might require, as they'd done for the last two years while he'd lost his senses. The King was then at Kilburn. The Archbishop sent the letter on post haste to the King, but, as we heard afterwards, it never got further than Somerset."

"Are my brothers and Warwick safe?"

"Yes, the most serious loss on our side was my lovely hair. You noticed it as I came in? They cut off one side while I was unconscious. Now d'you think I'd better cut off the other, or go into a monastery till this side grows?"

"Oh, Robert, please be serious, don't you realise what this month has been to me, watching and waiting."

"Sorry. Our losses were very light. I don't think more than six score were killed altogether and most of the right ones too; but to continue——"

"Yes, yes——" she said, laying a restraining hand on Edward's arm, who was getting impatient with this effeminate drawling creature, who thought of nothing but his hair. She knew from long experience nothing would be gained by any attempt to hurry de Vere.

"Well, from Ware, the Duke sent a letter in the same terms direct to the King at St. Albans. Some usher

called Will Josephs got hold of it and gave it to Somerset, who put it in his pocket to keep the first one company.

"On the 23rd we camped about half a mile from St. Albans on the Ware road. At 7 a.m. Buckingham turned up for breakfast, and the Duke repeated to him what he'd put in his letters to the Archbishop and the King. Buckingham hadn't heard a word about the letters, and was quite put out about it. I heard him say he was sick and tired of Somerset, who seemed to think himself King now. The Duke said he must insist that Somerset and such persons as he accused should be handed over to him 'to have what they deserved.' It looked as though Buckingham thought this a very good idea. Anyway he went back and we advanced towards the city. Buckingham came back in an hour and said Somerset didn't think it at all a good idea, and that the King had said he would disgrace his patron saint St. Edward, and his kingship, if he gave up one of his servants; and that he would see every mother's son of us dead first. Forsooth, he would!

"I can't say I was sorry. I'd just got a new battle-axe from Florence in Italy. A real beauty, with a square steel spike on its backside with such a cunning little curve. I'd begun to think I'd not get a chance of trying it. It was beautifully chased with vine leaves and grapes."

"Do show it me," said Edmond eagerly.

"I wish I could. Take my advice, young fellow, when you've a pretty toy like that, don't get knocked on the head. As I lay on the ground, some base caitiff stole it."

"Oh, go on about the battle, please," said Edmond.

"How many men did father kill?" asked the small fat George.

"Oh, several hundred."

"But you told us just now," said Edmond, "that only about six score had been killed."

"Oh, did I? Well, perhaps he only killed a hundred, then."

"That didn't leave many for you," said George.

"Didn't Uncle Salisbury and Cousin Richard kill many?" said Edward.

"And Jake Butler and Jasper Brewer and Wilkins Cook?" said George.

"And my groom Goodwin and Gratorex harbourer?" said Edmond, whose chief friends were amongst the grooms and huntsmen as George's were from the victualling department.

"I really can't tell you, I'm afraid," replied de Vere. "You see, I don't know them all by name, and was rather busy seeing no one killed me. A most important matter in a battle, I assure you."

Cecily was leaning back in her chair, rather enjoying the relaxation of this childish prattle. What a child Robert was at heart.

"When the Duke realised that Somerset was selfish enough not to come out and lay his head on the block, and the King too much of a man to make him, well he just said, 'We must fetch him,' but whatever happened he'd have the hide off every mother's son if any harm befell the King.

"He commanded the right, turning up Shropshire lane, and Salisbury the left, down the London road. I went with Warwick. I know St. Albans well. It was a damned hot day; I'd not had a sup of ale since six in the morning; it was now midday, and you could have mulled sack in my basnet. I said to young Richard, 'There are two good inns at the end of this orchard, the Keys and the Chekkers; I'll lay you a hundred marks

I get a drink before you, and you can choose your inn."

"What sort of drink?" asked George. "Who won?"

"We're coming to that. Naturally a few of Somerset's rogues tried to frustrate our laudable ambition, the dirty caitiffs, but they soon saw reason and bolted through the house. We followed and came out into the main street. There seemed a good deal of noise up by St. Peter's, so when I'd finished my drink I thought I'd go and see what was doing; there was a particularly nasty-looking fellow I wanted to catch. He'd kicked one of my men in the face quite unnecessarily; the man was dead enough to satisfy any one."

"If you wanted to catch the man, why did you stop and have a drink?" said Edward rather contemptuously.

"Have you never wanted two things at once?" replied Robert. "Besides, a bet's a bet, and a full flagon stood on the counter."

"I should not have left a full flagon to go and fight," said George.

"No, you wouldn't, you greedy little pig," said Edward, "but do go on."

"Well, I hadn't got far up the street, when what should I see coming down like a scalded cat but three gold cups on their red field, coronet and all. This is my lucky day, I thought. I never had much opinion of your friend Wiltshire, if you remember, and this was really a chance of seeing if my new axe was any good. A leather jerkin or two was no fair test. I thought if I could sidestep him I could give him a crack with the spike as he passed. I hadn't closed my vizor after my drink because it was so damned hot. The next thing I knew was the hilt of his sword had hit me on the side of the head and he was going down Cook's Row as fast as his legs would

carry him, shedding bits of armour just like a runaway tinker's cart.

"Things were beginning to get lively, and by the time I got to St. Peter's, where the King's banner was, there was quite a fight on. I saw Clifford fall and Northumberland, then Philip Wentworth threw down the royal standard and bolted. As I got to the King he was struck in the neck by an arrow; He'd no armour on and was standing there with his back to the wall as if he were in church.

"Forsooth," he said to me, "some one has done a sad felony to wound the Lord's Anointed."

"Was he seriously hurt?" said Cecily anxiously, for every one loved this poor weak King.

"No. He was all right, or as right as he ever is, when I left. We were getting him into a cobbler's shop out of danger, when Buckingham and his son Stafford came up with Somerset and Dorset, and the fight really started. They seemed to think we were trying to hurt him. Somerset was plying that great sword of his, and cleared quite a space round him.

"You remember we didn't part the best of friends at Caen; I reminded him of the incident, and inquired after his wife and family. That seemed to make him quite angry. He was a better swordsman than I gave him credit for, and he got one in under my arm, but I landed a terrific blow on the top of his head, and he went on his hands and knees. Then, as the good Duke prophesied, I'm afraid I was a little unnecessarily rough. That square spike went through his back-piece as if it were an old frying pan; in fact it will make a good sieve for some one with a few more holes punched in it. That axe is fine, but I think it wanted a little more weight in the shaft. It doesn't come up on the guard quick enough.

"The next thing I knew was I was lying in the cobbler's house at Henry's feet, with the Duke, Salisbury and Warwick kneeling in front of him. He was telling them to stop this horrid slaughter of his men, which they did. I had the most awful shock when I saw my face in a breastplate on the floor. While I lay unconscious, some barbarian of a barber had shaved off all the hair on the left side of my head, in order to save himself trouble dressing the cut Wiltshire had given me in passing. What I want to know is who won the 100 marks? Young Warwick was undoubtedly in the Chekkers before I was in the Keys. That lad will go far; I never saw a prettier axeman. But when I got out of the Keys, and was wiping my mouth, he was chasing a fellow up the street with his vizor closed. I'll take my oath on the bones of St. Alban, he hadn't had time to open and close it and get so far up the street where, by the way, he persuaded the King's men to let his father in, at least his axe did; a very nice thing that axe, but a bit rough. It had no ivory let into the handle like mine. Rather like himself, strong and determined, but a little heavy in the head. Now, Duchess, who d'you think won the bet? Does Richard owe me 100 marks or do I owe it him?"

"Who else was killed?" asked Cecily, ignoring his question.

"Well, I don't think there were any serious losses except my hair; the rest were rather in the nature of gains. Somerset, Northumberland, Clifford and Stafford were killed, but except the last, who was a good fellow, you couldn't count any of them a loss. Buckingham, Devon and Dorset were wounded—a great pity Dorset and Stafford couldn't exchange places. About 40 squires and knights were reported dead, but I don't think you knew any of them."

"Who was with the King besides those you have mentioned?" asked Cecily.

"Jasper Tudor, Dudley, de Roos, and a few others."

"Had we no serious loss on our side?" asked Cecily.

"Yes, indeed. We had my personal appearance. I shan't be fit to be seen for a year and a day. It's dreadful, and I don't know what to do. D'you know of a nice monastery where I should get plenty of hunting and lots of good wine, or better, a nunnery?—No.—Looking like this, it must be a monastery."

"What are Richard's plans? We really have heard enough of your hair."

"I don't know. He wasn't a bit sympathetic about my hair either, but packed me right off here with half a dozen men, saying you'd be furious with him if anybody got hold of this bit of gossip before you."

"Where are the others? I only heard one horse."

"Idle rogues, they stopped on the way. Said they or their horses were too tired to go on. I hope you're pleased with my news."

"Thanks be to God. I'll send for the priests and tell them to sing the 'Te Deum' in the chapel."

"At the same time you might tell them to get me a cup of water and a crust of bread and leave it on the doorstep. I'm rather hungry; I've not had much time to eat since the day before yesterday."

"Oh, Robert," cried Cecily, springing to her feet. "You don't mean to say you've ridden night and day all wounded without rest or food to bring me this glad news, and I refused you a cup of wine. Oh! Can you forgive me?"

"That's all right, quite all right, quite, quite . . ." De Vere crumpled face down across the table.

"Funny man," said George. "I shouldn't have ridden for two days without food and then laughed."

"What a silly fuss he made about his hair," said Edward, while he helped his mother raise the wounded man. "As if any one would care. He must be a milksop. I don't suppose he's a bit hurt really."

The bandage had slipped, and disclosed a ragged tear, showing a white bone over the temple.

"I used to think so too," said Cecily. "Would you care to fight on with a wound like that when you could have retired to have it dressed, and even if so, would you then have ridden night and day? I begin to understand why your father allows him such licence."

George said nothing. His mouth was full of the food the servants had brought for de Vere, who was dead.

CHAPTER XXVIII

BISHOP'S MOVE

YORK'S conduct after the battle of St. Albans must surely acquit him of the sinister designs attributed to him by Margarite. If ever a man had the ball at his feet and refrained from kicking it he did. All his powerful enemies were either dead or his prisoners. He had in his hands the King, the Queen, the Prince of Wales and a victorious army. That he could rely on the support of the Commons is shown by the fact that the Parliament he caused to be called four days (May 26th) after the battle, thrice petitioned the council to make him Protector.

What did he do? He conducted the King back with all honour to London and restored him to his wife, setting no restrictions on their liberty. He strengthened the ministry by retaining all surviving ministers, except Dudeley, replacing the dead ones with his friends of proven capacity.

He himself became Constable, Warwick, Governor of Calais, offices which had been held by Somerset. Salisbury was restored to the Wardenship of the Scottish Marches. Lord Bouchier his brother-in-law, became Treasurer in place of Lord Dudeley, who had shown himself not only incapable but corrupt. John Bouchier, a younger brother of Lord Bouchier, was created Lord Berners and added to the council. Even the Duke of Buckingham consented to remain in the ministry in spite of the death of his son at St. Albans. Lord Poynings, now Earl of Northumberland, by his father's death at St. Albans, was left in

command of Berwick, which was being attacked by the Scots under James II., as unscrupulous a blackguard as Lewis XI., with the difference that Lewis was clever.

All the peers attended the new Parliament except Poynings who was otherwise engaged at Berwick, Rivers and Welles who were in Calais, and de Moleyns, a prisoner in France.

The Yorkists endeavoured to excuse themselves to the King for the part they had taken in the late rising. Old Lord Cromwell, who had been leader of the opposition against Suffolk, went to Henry and told him that he had not been in it. This was too much for the fierce young Warwick, who violently denounced him as the real instigator, and so alarmed him that he appealed for protection to Warwick's father, Lord Salisbury.

York in his capacity of Chief Minister forbade the carrying of arms in the streets, insisting that the lords should keep their retainers in their barges whilst they attended Parliament.

Leaving the others to their wrangles, he got on with his job, forming five committees to deal with the pressing needs of the country, these being the expenses of the King's household, the defence of Calais and of Berwick, the keeping of the seas, the balance of trade, and the government of Wales. He hoped that by thus employing the Lords, they would have no time to fight one another. An Act of Oblivion was passed for St. Albans, all the blame being thrown on Somerset, who deserved it; on Thorpe, who was in prison all the time; and on William Josephs who had failed to deliver York's letter to the King at St. Albans. The last two were fined and Josephs was sent to join Thorpe in gaol. Before Parliament adjourned in August, York caused all the peers to take a new oath of allegiance to the King.

Devon and Bonville resumed their customary autumn warfare. On this occasion Lord Courtenay, Devon's son, attacked Bonville's country solicitor, Mr. Radford, at his house near Poghill, plundered it and murdered the unfortunate owner on the roadside. Lord Bonville resented this, and a pitched battle ensued on Clyst Heath in which Bonville was defeated. Lord Devon, thinking it was a pity to disband his men after such a pretty victory, went on to Exeter and proceeded to plunder the Cathedral and hold the Canons to ransom.

Soon after Parliament had adjourned, the King's health became worse and he again became incapable of acting. This prevented York from going to the country either to settle the dispute between Devon and Bonville, or more probably compel them to keep the public peace.

York was sick and tired of the whole thing. When the Commons, who had met on the 12th November, on the 14th petitioned the Lords to appoint him Protector for the second time, he refused. They would not take no for an answer, and next day, Saturday, November 15th, repeated their request, setting out that a strong man must be appointed to suppress such "grievous and great riots done in the West country, between the Earl of Devonshire and Lord Bonville." All Sunday was spent at Baynard's Castle trying to persuade York to undertake the task.

He pointed out the hopelessness of his position as long as the Queen opposed his every move, to which the Chancellor and Buckingham replied that her attitude was prompted by natural fear for her son. York asked what he could do to reassure her more than he had.

It was suggested that he might propose that the Prince of Wales should have full enjoyment of all the revenues of the Duchies of Cornwall and Chester, which

should be paid to his guardian. York raised no objection, but pointed out that he was getting very tired of always paying out and never raking in. He reminded them that he was still owed thousands for his Lieutenancy in France; that he had never received a brass halfpenny of his salary as Viceroy of Ireland; nor even the miserable 2000 marks he had been promised for expenses last time he was Protector. He wished to hand the Government of the country over to the Council and retire to the country for his own peace and the health of his wife and family.

The last remark was his undoing, for the ambition of the Beauforts and Neviles was too strong in Cecily's veins to allow of her being made the excuse. She too urged his acceptance.

There was no one else. Norfolk was too old, Buckingham too weak, Salisbury had too many enemies, Devon was too turbulent, Exeter quite incompetent, and the other great Lords lacked experience. York at last reluctantly agreed, but only on condition that he should be supported by "a strong Council, nor of favour and affection, but of men approved of wisdom and indifference," who should be paid for attendance to their duties.

He also stipulated that he himself should have 3000 marks instead of 2000 and 1000 in hand. This was readily agreed to, but he never received a shilling, the sum promised being added to what was already owed him.

On the Monday his appointment was announced. He lost no time in collecting men to restore order in the West; and set out on the 13th December, the very day on which Parliament was adjourned till the 14th January.

Either Autumn sessions were unpopular, or the peers temporal and spiritual had great faith in York's Govern-

ment, for during that session only thirty-seven out of a hundred and one registered an appearance. On York's return from the West, where he had temporarily settled things, he found that the King had partly recovered, and on the 25th February, Henry came down to the House in person and terminated the Protectorate. At the same time, reposing complete confidence in York, he implored him to continue to act as chief Minister and promised his unfailing support. Cecily warned her husband that this support could be relied on for just so long as the interval between his leaving and Margarite's entering the King's presence.

This Parliament was a notable one. Under York's guidance it attacked the long standing abuse of the "benefit of clergy," by which any man who could recite the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, could get away with murder by claiming to be tried by an ecclesiastical court. On this occasion they only went as far as to suggest that no one should claim this right twice, but vested interest was too strong and the spiritual lords were able to defeat the measure. Still, the Commons succeeded in getting a scale of fees drawn up to curb the extortion of the Exchequer Courts and the Treasury officials, with heavy penalties for overcharges. Another abuse they dealt with was the great increase in the number of lawyers, who ran about the country stirring up trouble between neighbours and fostering "untrue and foreign law suits." In the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk alone they cut down the number from sixty to fourteen. They also passed protective measures to foster the infant silk trade, and a law regulating malting for the benefit of the farmers.

Parliament had begun to control the executive.

The Calais garrison, unpaid as usual, refused to accept their new governor, Warwick, till they received

their arrears. Arrangements were made for the Staple of Calais to advance £50,000 to meet this demand, and Warwick was thus able to take over command from Rivers and Welles on April 22nd (1456). In April York left Buckingham in charge of the Government, and for the benefit of Cecily and her baby's health took a holiday at his castle of Sandal. The Queen and Prince of Wales went to Tutbury nearby, "where they and the Yorks waited (visited) on one another."

Margarite and her favourite, Henry Beaufort, now 3rd Duke of Somerset, had been actively plotting against York ever since St. Albans, and had collected a band of young nobles headed by those who had lost their fathers there.

York's foreign policy aimed at peace with Burgundy and the recovery of Normandy, while the Queen naturally wanted exactly the opposite. Burgundy, ever since she could remember, had been the enemy of her house and her father's gaoler. For some time York had been in communication with the rebellious French nobles under the Duc d'Alençon, who unfortunately was arrested by Charles in May.

York had not long been out of London, when a riot broke out between the Mercers and the Lombards. A Lombard was killed, and the Lord Mayor arrested and imprisoned one of the Mercers. The apprentices broke into the prison and released him. The Queen very foolishly ordered Buckingham to march into the city to restore order and try the offenders, thereby committing a most flagrant breach of the City's charter. The King was brought up from Windsor to overawe the rioters, and peace was restored.

Buckingham then again attempted to try the rioters, and the Queen, who had hotly espoused the cause of the foreigners, sent her own attorney to prosecute, thereby

for the second time deeply offending the citizens. They rose to a man and expelled Buckingham and his court, whereupon Margarite, as she had done six years before, hurried the King off to Kenilworth.

James II of Scotland, who had taken advantage of the St. Albans rising to break his truce and attack Berwick, now sent the Lyon King of Arms to London to complain that his ships had been captured on the high seas and to threaten war.

York, having kept Lyon two months awaiting his return from Sandal, told him to tell his master that he, James, was an insolent perjured vassal of the King of England, and that if he did not mind his manners he would come north and give him a sharp lesson. James continued to burn unprotected houses and steal cattle, so York at once went north to make good his threat. He visited Cecily on the way; a sad home-coming, for the baby Ursula was dead.

Reaching the border, from Sandal, he sent James a letter, telling him his conduct was that of a moss-trooper and border thief, not that of a king or even a courageous knight, and calling on him to give battle. James retired hurriedly to Edinburgh, whence he wrote to King Charles that he was on the very best terms with both York and Salisbury, and proposing a joint attack on England, but first of all he would require financial aid from Charles. The King of France apparently knew his James, and funds were not forthcoming. York and Salisbury remained in the north watching the border till they received a summons to attend a Grand Council at Coventry.

When they got there, they found that during the summer the Queen had re-established her complete ascendancy over the King's mind.

The Ministry was entirely changed and Somerset, aged 21, was now Chief Minister. The three Bouchiers had been dismissed and replaced by Bishop Waynflete, Lord Shrewsbury and Lawrence Booth as Chancellor, Treasurer and Privy Seal.

William Booth, on being made Archbishop of York, had managed to procure the appointment of Queen's Chancellor, which he himself had held so long, for his half-brother, Lawrence, who was at the same time consecrated Bishop of Durham.

Buckingham, who had no love for young Somerset, warned York and Salisbury that they had "nothing now to lean on but the King's Grace," and arranged a secret interview between them and the King before the Queen could have them arrested.

Henry told them they must keep the peace and not settle their disputes by force of arms; and that if they would do so, he would receive them into his grace again.

This seemed to York unjust since, for the last six or seven years, he had acquitted himself most successfully of the responsibility thrust on him to separate the various dog fights, had drawn sword once only, and that in self-defence. However, they both agreed.

Somerset was furious at the springing of his trap. He had celebrated his accession to power by allowing his men to loot Coventry. It would be fairer perhaps to say they celebrated it by starting to loot the city, for the town guard turned out and beat them up; on which Somerset joined his men, and was with difficulty rescued by Buckingham.

The Council, which had only been called to entrap York and Salisbury, now dispersed, having done nothing but demonstrate once more to the most powerful and wise nobles of England that, while a Beaufort was near

the Queen, peace and good government were impossible. This was the third attempt on York's life. The Queen spent the rest of the year introducing the baby Prince to his tenants in the Palatinate of Chester and making herself as popular as she could there.

York retired to his beloved Wigmores and, being relieved of all his public duties, spent a happy winter with his wife and children.

If Henry had not been so occupied in the matter of Reginald Peacock, Bishop of Chichester, it is possible that he would not have allowed York to be dismissed, but this case was one in which he was really interested.

Peacock, a Welsh divine, was certainly an able writer and independent thinker; whether a clear one is a matter of opinion, but all must agree he was most unwise.

He supported the power which the Bishop of Rome tried to exercise over the temporal matters of the Church of England, and at the same time attacked his spiritual authority in matters of doctrine. By the first he enraged all his fellow bishops, and by the second gave them a stick to beat him with. He certainly put forward and supported several distinctly heterodox, if not heretical, doctrines. Henry was deeply interested and, after reviewing the case very carefully, dismissed Peacock from the Council.

Archbishop Bourchier was not a man to stand any nonsense. He told Peacock he could resign and burn his books, or be burnt with them. Peacock appealed to Rome, who ordered the case to be transferred there.

Bourchier bluntly told the Pope he was capable of maintaining discipline in his own sphere without any help from him and would deal with his clergy by the law of England. Again Peacock was given the alternative of the stake or recantation. He recanted, and from

December 4th, 1457, spent the rest of his life in a cell deprived of the pens and paper which had proved his downfall.

George Nevile, Bishop of Exeter, Warwick's brother, though only twenty-three had during the trial shown marked ability in support of the Archbishop. He had been early dedicated to the Church, for at thirteen he was prebend of York, at twenty-one a bishop like his uncle, Robert, late Bishop of Durham, whom it was hoped he would succeed, it being the richest See in England.

In the January of that same year, 1457, York had received a summons to attend another Grand Council at Coventry. He avoided the chance of another trap by going to Warwick Castle where he had adequate protection.

The Queen had failed to find out anything against him during the preceding year. Her favourite, Wiltshire, had proved himself a complete failure in Ireland.

He had not only allowed his cousins Edmond and William Butler to attack the FitzGeralds in Kildare and Meath, but had permitted the Treasurer, Sir Henry Boyn and the Wogans, a wild Irish sept, to join them and ravage all the country round Maynooth and Rathmore, plundering and murdering all and sundry. In the middle of this disturbance he had gone to England, leaving as his Deputy John May, Archbishop of Armagh, who proved even more useless than his principal. The people of Kildare and the Mayor of Dublin rose and turned the Butlers out of the city. The Pale then sent a petition to England, praying that the Earl of Meath (Duke of York) should be sent over "as the land of Ireland was never nearer on the point to be so finally destroyed, since the conquest. The true liege people in these parts dare not appear in the King's courts nor ride to

market or other places for dread of being slayn, taken and dispoiled of their goods and that the Lord Lieutenant and his Deputy with his attacks on the Geraldines had caused more destructions in Kiladare and the liberty of Meath within a short space than had been done by Irish and English enemies since the settlement of the Pale."

This petition gave Margarite the opportunity of again offering the Lieutenancy to York and the hope of thus finally getting rid of him. Cecily advised him to accept it, pointing out that without civil war the Queen would never allow him to take his proper place in the Government, and that it was better for him to be out of the way till she was forced to recall him. Ireland might be a place of dreary exile, but was better than the Tower. Anyway, he could live in peace without the fear of at any moment being attacked from behind, for there his enemies would at least be in front of him.

The moment it was known that he had accepted, disorder broke out all over England. Sir William Herbert of Chepstow started a war with the Tudors. Jasper and Edmond, the King's half-brothers, and the Queen went personally to suppress it, but so vindictive was she in her efforts to restore order that those who had supported her fell away and she could do nothing. While in power, York had generally been able to keep the Nevilles and Percies apart, but now he was about to go, they went for each other's throats in their traditional manner. In July a pitched battle at Castleton in Yorkshire ended in the Nevilles gaining a complete victory and taking prisoner Lord Egremont and Sir Richard Percy, who were brought up at York Assizes and indicted before Judges Bingham and Pole, who cast them in £11,000 damages.

The judges were as a rule drawn from the upper

middle class which, far from suffering in silence from these baronial wars, never missed an opportunity of expressing in strong terms its disapproval of public disorder when it had the chance.

Egremont and his brother were committed to Newgate, but the Sheriffs of Yorkshire, Verney and Steward, allowed them to escape. The place of refuge they chose to avoid the sentence of King's justice was their own King's court!

The weakness of the Queen's Government at home was reflected abroad. James II was allowed to send envoys to Coventry and negotiate a truce, as if he were an independent sovereign instead of a rebellious vassal, and Somerset apologised to him for York's strong letters. James suggested a marriage between his sister Joan and Somerset. This came to nothing, but added to the steadily growing suspicion that the relations between the Queen and her twenty-one years old chief Minister were not altogether platonic.

Encouraged by the way James was treated by England, the King of France employed a fleet built to assist the Pope against the Turks to attack and sack Sandwich.

This was a stinging blow to the pride of the nation. For generations, except for an odd piratical raid on a fishing village, our coasts had been inviolate from foreign invasion. Now one of the Cinque Ports had been attacked by land and sea, stormed and sacked, and the plunder carried off in English ships captured in harbour.

Had the French and Bretons scuttled back home, this might have been regarded as a surprise attack, but this combined fleet which, in addition to many leading men from Maine and Anjou, had on board the Duke of Lorraine, the Queen's brother, and was commanded

by her old champion, the Seneschal de Brézé, sailed up and down the channel for three days, defying the Duke of Exeter, High Admiral of England. Feeling ran so high that the Queen was even accused of being the instigator of the raid. What advantage she could have gained by such action it is impossible to imagine, but probably she gave away the defenceless position of the coast towns in her letters to her father.

Exeter only got to sea on the 1st October, when he sailed to La Rochelle and back, accomplishing absolutely nothing. Much to his annoyance the Council suspended him and commissioned Warwick to keep the sea for three years.

Bishop Waynflete, who exercised great influence with the King, implored the Queen to attempt a reconciliation with the Yorkist party.

CHAPTER XXIX

WHITE KNIGHT ADVANCES AND RETIRES

RECONCILIATION was far from easy, Margarite having for the last three years done all she could to inflame the blood feuds of St. Albans.

The English were not given to such feuds. Were father or son killed in a private war, in fair fight, it was taken as part of the rough game and did not even prevent marriages between the families once the war was over. On the Continent, especially in Italy where Margarite had spent her girlhood, family feuds were commonly carried from one generation to another.

Matters were eased a little by the fact that the turbulent Earl of Devon died at Abingdon, while the court were there, some said by poison. Between the middle of November, when the Council adjourned after having dealt with Bishop Peacock, and 27th January when it was due to reassemble, Bishop Waynflete on one side and Archbishop Bourchier on the other, had got the two parties to agree to meet.

York, as usual trusting and peace-loving, arrived at Baynard's Castle with only 104 servants of all sorts, a very moderate number for those days. Salisbury, not so trusting, turned up at Cold Harbour House with nearly 500. The Queen's party consisting of Northumberland, Somerset, Egremont and Exeter, each brought a small army. The Yorkists kept to the city, the Lancastrians to Holborn and Blackfriars.

The Mayor, Godfrey Boleyn,¹ turned out the trained

¹ Grandfather of Queen Anne Boleyn.

bands to keep the peace.¹ Salisbury, alarmed by the size of the Lancastrian armies, sent for Warwick to come over with the pick of the Calais garrison.

York proved in a very accommodating temper, and worked hard to bring his friends along with him. Buckingham did the same on his side, and refused to ask or take any blood money for the loss of his son at St. Albans. After two months wrangling terms were at last arranged, and on the 17th March, 1458, the King returned to London from Berkhamsted where he had been since the opening of the conference.

Ninety-one out of the ninety-two Lords Spiritual and Temporal were present on the 24th March in the Great Hall of the White Friars, where a deed of reconciliation was duly sealed by the various parties.

York, Salisbury and Warwick agreed to build a chantry in St. Albans and to endow it to the extent of £45, so as to provide priests to say masses for the souls of all those slain in the battle there. The Beauforts accepted assignments of 5000 marks owed by the King to York and 1000 marks assignment was made to Lord Clifford by Warwick. Salisbury released the Percies of the damages awarded for Castleton, and they bound themselves in a sum of 4000 marks to keep the peace for ten years.

York pointed out to his wife that he and Warwick had only given up the King's I.O.U.'s, which he had regarded for years as waste paper, and, together with Salisbury, £45 per annum and a chantry, which was not a big price to pay for peace, combined with benefit for their own souls. Cecily inclined to be sceptical, but hoped for the best.

¹ The number given by contemporary historians varies from 500 to 10,000. It is the same with the battles, one gives twice as many killed as another says were present.

This "Loveday" (24th March) was celebrated with a grand procession through the city to St. Paul's. The King, really happy, for he believed in this profession of friendship, led it with the crown on his head, and was followed by the Queen and York, Somerset and Salisbury, Exeter and Warwick, walking in pairs hand in hand.

On the 29th May the Queen's party received a crushing blow. Warwick, with only five battleships, three carvals and four pinnances, utterly defeated a Franco-Spanish fleet of twenty-eight sail, of which sixteen were battleships. Six great ships were captured and sent up the Thames.

This restoration of our prestige sent London mad with joy. Within a month the Lubeck fleet in the narrow seas refused to strike their flag to Warwick who fired across their bows, and as they still refused, he attacked them and carried the majority into Calais Harbour. They protested to the Queen, who, siding as usual with the foreigners, sent Lord Rivers to Rochester to hold an inquiry, and called on Warwick for an explanation. Warwick refused, though his answer to this summons has not been preserved, but it can easily be imagined that in effect he conveyed the fact that he was answerable to the King and the Council only, and to no uxorious lackey.

The Queen ordered him to come to London and excuse his conduct to the Council.

Knowing he would be acclaimed by the people, he raised no objection. The capture of the Lubeck salt fleet was immensely popular in London. That England was not at war with the Hanseatic League seemed a matter of no consideration, for the wide privileges enjoyed by the League cut into English trade in every direction, and had given rise to a rivalry which found expression in a

feud carried on often with bloodshed and waged on all known seas.

During Henry's reign there had been no great victories, and Warwick's naval successes, coming after so many defeats and failures, were eagerly seized upon by the people as an opportunity for rejoicing.

Margarite so little understood the English that she chose this moment of public hysteria to send her attorney into the city, where she was already hated, to prosecute the hero of the hour for piracy. The mob seized the unfortunate lawyer and beat him to death.

The Queen, having learnt nothing from the humiliation she had suffered two years before, caused the Governors of two city Inns and the alderman of the ward to be arrested.

This attack on Warwick did not even meet with the approval of her own Council. Lord Shrewsbury, the Treasurer, protested and explained the foolishness of the course she was pursuing. Margarite would brook no opposition and dismissed him, giving his place to her old favourite Wiltshire.

Being unable to proceed against Warwick by law, she ordered him to hand over the Governorship of Calais to Somerset. This he refused to do, saying he had received it from the King and Parliament, and only they could deprive him of it. He further enraged the Queen by inviting her to summon Parliament, knowing, as well as she did, that she dared not do so, for they would have insisted on York's being chief Minister, and probably Protector.

Warwick attended a Council meeting to explain his conduct to the King, but took the precaution of bringing with him a barge full of old soldiers from the French wars picked from the Calais garrison.

Everything went off peacefully the first day, Somerset being alone in wishing to attack him openly. Wiltshire did not dare, since he knew Warwick had seen him running away at St. Albans. On the second day, while waiting for their lord, Warwick's old soldiers of fortune naturally gravitated to the door of the great Kitchen opposite to the Council chamber, and hung about hoping they would be able to scrounge something. Rough chaff was being exchanged between them and the cooks, when some scullion remarked that they were no better than guttersnipes and that they had been kicked out of France by a woman. To draw a sword in a royal palace was punishable with the loss of a hand, but these old soldiers knew of several other ways of inflicting grievous bodily harm. The jester's face was bashed in by a mailed fist with a stone in it. The cooks swarmed out, armed with the implements of their calling, cleavers, nine-foot steel spits, yard-long skewers, carving-knives and wood-hatchets, formidable weapons against men who dared not draw their swords.

The Council, hearing the noise, looked out of the window. Seeing his men attacked, Warwick rushed to join them, and was instantly set upon. He had no scruples about drawing his sword, and with it carved a way for himself and his men through the cooks and scullions to his waiting barge. The Queen, seeing her chance, directed the Lord Chamberlain to apply for a warrant for his arrest on a charge of brawling in a Royal Palace.

News of this move having been quickly conveyed to Warwick at his father's house in the city, he at once returned to Calais. The net result of the Queen's actions was to end the Great Reconciliation, convince Warwick of her bad faith, and still further alienate the capital of

her husband's country, the centre of its wealth. Feeling no longer safe there, she moved the court to Coventry.

Little did she know that twelve years would elapse before she would re-enter London, and then only as a prisoner, led through its streets, while the man she had just driven out would be lying dead in St. Paul's, having fallen a few days before fighting her battles.

CHAPTER XXX

RED TAKES QUEEN

YORK, who was still acting as foreign secretary for a time, threw it up when he found out that behind his back the Queen was carrying on an entirely different policy with her father and uncle in France, the result of which had been the sack of Sandwich.

He kept in close touch with his deputy in Ireland, but lived quietly at Ludlow with his wife and his seven surviving children. Of these Edward, now seventeen, tall and exceptionally good-looking, was already a fine man-at-arms and well skilled with the bow. He inclined to idleness and self-indulgence, and tried to make his brother Edmond follow his example. Such tendencies were strongly suppressed by their tutor, Sir Richard Croft, whom they both hated, and more than once they requested their father to remove him.

Edmond, the very reverse of his brother, was studious and quiet, loving books and talk more than arms and hunting. Slight and almost girlish in appearance, he was in no way devoid of the courage and obstinacy of his race. George, now ten, a fat lazy little fellow with engaging manners and an insatiable appetite for sweets, had a cruel streak in him and enjoyed nothing better than tormenting his six-year-old brother Richard, or his sister Margarite, two years his senior. This young lady, also a student, was possessed of a mulish obstinacy nothing could move; once she got an idea into her head there it remained, impervious to argument or reason.

Richard was small but wiry, and very strong for his size. One of his shoulders was a trifle higher than the

other, a misfortune which gave George the greatest pleasure, for he could always make his little brother fly in a rage by calling him "Hunchback" or "Cripple" and crossing his fingers at him.

All the brothers adored Edward, whom they looked on as a god. For ever leading them into mischief, and sometimes leaving them to bear the brunt, he would say with his irresistible smile he hadn't asked them to come, and, if they were fools enough to get caught, it was not his fault. Their admiration for him blinded them to the fact that Edward always had the oyster and generally got away scot free, while they only got the shells and a beating.

Edward had that wonderful art of convincing not only others but himself, that it was they who were selfish for not wanting to do exactly what he wished.

If baby Richard could get anywhere near his big brother, he cared not how many beatings he got.

Of the elder daughters, Ann, though only twenty-one, had already quarrelled with and left her husband, the Duke of Exeter, and returned to her father's house with her baby Ann. Some said the quarrel was caused by her husband's support of the Westmoreland Neviles, others that she cast too favourable glances at the handsome Sir Thomas St. Leger, whilst others asserted that she was disgusted with her husband's cowardice—as some called it—at the time de Brézé sacked Sandwich.

Elizabeth, the beauty of the family, was engaged, much against Cecily's wishes, to the young Duke of Suffolk; she did not consider him sufficiently well born.

York, in a bantering answer to her objections, had pointed out every one could not be born a Neville, and that this marriage would give them a useful ally in the Eastern counties if the worst came to the worst, to which she retorted:

“Like Exeter.”

On the whole they were a very happy family and devoted to their father, who was inclined to spoil them, and would have removed the hated Croft if Cecily had allowed him.

York's and all the children's love for Cecily was mixed up with distinct awe of her, which none of them lost till their dying day. Cecily's cold silent disapproval was far more awful for the family to face than their father's scoldings or Croft's blows. It went deeper somehow.

Cecily watched the Queen's doings with ever-growing suspicion, and was not surprised when in April she sent out letters under the Privy Seal, inviting all well-disposed persons to meet her at Leicester on the 10th May fully armed with provisions for two months. The country being at peace, very few turned up and nothing was done. She then moved into Cheshire and distributed amongst the gentry 10,000 silver swans, the badge of Duke Humphrey, which the Prince of Wales had adopted.

Salisbury sent repeated messages to York, warning him of his danger, but relying on his complete innocence he resolutely refused to make any move.

By July, the Queen had a large army quartered round Kenilworth.

Salisbury felt obliged to take the initiative, and with two of his sons, Thomas and John, left Middleham. He marched south with about 2000 men, giving out that he was desirous of seeing the King and assuring him personally of the loyalty of himself, of his sons, and of Warwick, who was coming over from Calais for the same purpose. To suppose that the Earl had any hostile intent is absurd, since he had with him no guns or siege train, and the King was at Kenilworth, one of the strongest

castles in England, for it had recently been equipped with artillery.

On receipt of Salisbury's letter to the King, asking for this interview, the Queen sent Lords Audley and Dudeley to arrest him, dead or alive. Never would she again find herself so favourably placed. Her army of about 10,000 lay between York and his friends in London and the north. He was quite unprepared, and what forces he had were scattered. Had Somerset had the least instincts of a general, he would never have allowed Warwick and some thousand of the Calais garrison to slip past him at Coleshill and join York at Ludlow, nor would he have divided his army into three, but would have marched the whole, first against Salisbury, turned it then on Warwick, after which he could have mopped York up at his leisure. As it was, he had one division in South Staffordshire, Lord Stanley commanded another which included the King's personal retinue round Eccleshall, while Audley and Dudeley chased after Salisbury with a third.

Near Market Drayton in Shropshire on September the 22nd Audley came in touch with him. Salisbury endeavoured to avoid a collision by turning aside, but he was compelled to face about and defend himself at Bloore Heath. Though greatly outnumbered, the hard borderers defeated the Cheshiresquires, and inflicted heavy losses upon them, killing Audley and taking Dudeley prisoner. The young Neviles, however, led the pursuit with too much vigour, and in the evening found themselves surrounded and prisoners at Tarporley.

Audley's force, which had consisted almost entirely of Lancashire and Cheshire men, suffered heavily. Venables of Kinderton, Duttons of Dutton, Molyneuxes of Sefton, Troutbecks, Leghs of Lyme, Egertons of Tatton, and Donnes were among the dead on the field.

Warwick was now at Ludlow with what he thought were the pick of the Calais garrison, under the old captains of the French war, Sir Osborn Mundford, Andrew Trollope and Sir John Blunt. He had heard from these men of their great deeds, of how, had their advice only been taken, France would never have been lost, of how against fearful odds they had held impossible positions for incredible times. He took their word for all this and believed at least half they told him.

The men too were veterans, mostly recruited by the elder Somerset and educated in the old school of French wars. Their drill was perfect and they looked magnificent in their new red jerkins, steel gauntlets and helmets provided by the Staple of Calais' loan. The relations between York and Salisbury had in the younger generation repeated themselves between Edward and Warwick, namely that intense admiration of a small boy for a big, which, though it may grow into a fast friendship as their ages approximate, still always leaves in the elder a superiority complex, which no success of the younger in later life can ever eradicate.

It was an anxious time for all those in Ludlow Castle. They were greatly outnumbered, and York was as intent as ever on avoiding civil war, for which there was no reason whatever except that Somerset had determined to have his life.

The King, who could not understand why he was being dragged about the country at the head of an army, also only wanted peace. He could not believe that York, who ever since they had been boys had always been so kind and helpful to him, should now turn against him. He, therefore, sent Richard Beauchamp, Bishop of Salisbury, to tell him that if only he would disband his army he would give a free pardon to him and all his men.

York assured the bishop, as previously he had the Garter King of Arms, that he and those with him were their King's most loyal subjects, and that they only had "a sufficient company" with them for their own protection. He explained that he had to have a force to keep order on the Welsh border, and that the attacks on Salisbury at Bloore Heath and on Warwick in London showed they were in great personal danger from their enemies. York and Salisbury went to Hereford and swore their allegiance before the bishop, who undertook to deliver it to the King.

Poor Henry suffered horribly. He insisted on sharing all the fatigue with his soldiers, and on sleeping out in the open with them. He became dangerous ill in consequence, and was even reported dead. Under this impression York ordered masses to be said for his soul in all the churches round Ludlow. This pious act was misrepresented by Archbishop Booth, who told the King that York had sunk so low and was so wicked a man that he had made sacrilegious use of the holy offices of the Church to encourage his soldiers in the impious rebellion against the Lord's Anointed.

That any one could be so irreligious shocked Henry deeply.

"Forsooth, this is very terrible and sad," he exclaimed. "I'm deeply grieved; I knew not that such awful wickedness was in any man. Forsooth it is very sad; how can I believe the word of such a wicked man?"

Thus matters stood on the 13th October. The King lay at Leominster and the Yorkists at Ludford, just in front of Ludlow Castle, facing each other across the river, both principals unwilling to fight, both forced on by their friends.

York had allowed himself to be badly caught with all

his eggs in one basket. His position from a military point of view was bad; behind him were the Welsh mountains, the Royal army was between him and any assistance he might possibly look for, while the sea cut him off from Ireland, since he had no ships. The fact that Cecily and all his children were at Ludlow, added to his anxiety.

Besides Salisbury and Warwick he had with him Lord Clinton, Sir David Hall and Sir Richard Croft.

While harmless shots were exchanged by the gunners across the river, they all sat in council eagerly discussing the situation.

"Now is the time to fight," said Warwick.

"But what about?" said York. "I have no quarrel with the King."

"No, but the Queen has one with you," said Cecily; "she can never forgive you the injury she has done you with her bastard child."

"But haven't I acknowledged it and given it all its rights and privileges as Prince of Wales? What more can I do?"

"That doesn't help," said his wife. "Margarite knows you know and will never forgive you."

"We are hopelessly outnumbered," said Hall gloomily.

"What if we are?" replied Warwick, "didn't our well-trained marchers rout three times the number of Cheshire clod-hoppers at Bloore?"

"And where are your two brothers now?" asked Hall. "Are they dead or alive, do you think?"

"That's certainly a reason to avoid hostilities if we can," said Salisbury, "but don't let their folly influence you, my dear brother, it was their own fault, and they must pay for it, though I wish they were here."

"Oh, Henry's so kind," said Cecily, "he'd never take vengeance on two rash boys."

"Somerset would, though," said Hall, "and he rules over the river."

"You spoiled them, my lord," said Sir Richard Croft, "not enough discipline. No one can say that of my charges," and he looked at Edward of March, and Edmond of Rutland, who had just passed from under his rule.

"You're right there," said Edward, and added under his breath, "you brutal old pig."

"Let's not sit here doing nothing," broke in Warwick impatiently. "Let's cross the river and rescue John and Tom. Then we can talk. My veterans from Calais can walk through this rabble as if they were French, eh, Sir Osborn? Didn't you tell me they'd often beaten more than ten and twenty to one?"

"Men or bottles?" asked Hall.

"What d'you mean?" said Blunt, turning to him.

"Oh, nothing, only I know some of them."

"Well, you old raven," said York. "How do we stand?"

"Badly. It's no good blinding yourself to facts. We've got our back to the mountains, hardly any guns, the Queen has brought the cannons from Kenilworth and has some very good soldiers. If Tom Stanley had joined the rest at Bloore Heath, my Lord Salisbury would not be here now. He had 5000 men at Eccleshall within eight miles and never moved all day."

"Perhaps Will Stanley stopped him," said Salisbury. "He promised me he would do his best for us. He's a very good friend of mine and always has been."

"Then he's a bad friend to his master," asserted Hall. "Mark my words, sir, never trust a false man. False to one, false to all, I say."

"I don't think they outnumber us by more than three

to two," said Edward, "I rode all along the line this morning."

"If they attack, we can hold the bridge and attack them while in the water, if they try to cross elsewhere," said Hall.

"With their superiority in numbers they could detach a force and cross higher up," said Trollope.

"We have no guns to speak of," added Mundford.

"Don't you think it would be better to accept the King's terms of a free pardon to all who surrender," put in Blunt. "The odds seem very heavy."

"Never," said Warwick. "Odds, what are they? Three to two, nothing. Look at St. Albans when we broke into the city; my band were outnumbered ten to one."

"But you took them in the rear," said Hall.

"Old Davy's right," said Mundford. "It's no good fighting, and the terms are generous."

"Who said I was against fighting?" said Hall.

"How dare you speak so, Sir Osborn?" shouted Warwick. "Haven't you a hundred times told me how you and your men defeated far greater odds?"

"Yes, my lord," returned Mundford, "but they were French, and the men were in practice, now they're tired after their long march. We did wonders in France, and will again here if we have a fair chance."

"With your legs well under the table and a mug of wine in front of you," said Hall.

"D'you deny that I've often defeated the French when greatly outnumbered," Mundford demanded hotly.

"Oh, no," said Hall. "I was wondering if it was at Pont Audemer or St. Fresney-le-Viscount where Trollope so gallantly rescued you."

"What could I do? The place was set on fire," replied Mundford lamely.

"And as to Fresney," put in Trollope, "the war was lost before I gave it up. The wonderful defence I put up enabled me to exact such good terms and get Osborn freed. I'm not a man to forget a friend."

"If you have anything to say against any of us, say it outside with your sword," said Blunt. "We're every bit as good as you, though we don't croak like a moulting raven about every little difficulty. We . . ."

"Silence!" said York sharply. "This is no time for you fellows to quarrel."

"But d'you think we can trust the King's word?" said Salisbury.

"No, certainly not," said Cecily. "Oh, Richard, will you never see that that woman means to kill you by fair means or foul? Before Heaven, I don't want you to fight here with all the children in the castle, but it's better to fight than be murdered."

"But, my dear, Henry would never do that, nor would my friends allow it."

"Your friends—where are they? Why aren't they here?"

"I think it's a bad moment to fight," said Clinton; "but I don't see what else we can do. The King's terms are on offer for another four days. Couldn't you obtain an interview?"

"Yes, I'll try," said York. "By St. Edward, I don't want to fight if by Heaven's aid it can be avoided."

"Remember," said Cecily, "Salisbury and Buckingham saved you from her treachery at Dartford. The Bouchiers did nothing to help you at St. Albans; Buckingham saved you again at Coventry on two occasions. Katherine tells me he's losing ground every day and that now only Somerset counts. He rules the Queen in everything."

"We'll hold the river, and send over to-morrow to see

what can be done," said York. "If the Queen is still obdurate we must fight it out."

"That's right," said Mundford. "I shouldn't fight if I could help it, sir."

"You never did," said Hall, "and not always then."

"Have you any of my old friends," York said quickly, "amongst your fellows, Sir Osborn? Any who were with me at Pontoise?"

"No, my lord," said Mundford. "They're all of a later vintage, but just as hard as the old lot, same old spirit, fear neither God nor man. With your leave we'll go round them and see all's right. We haven't forgotten your old rule as you'll see."

The council broke up, York detained Hall, gave him a severe reprimand for his ill-manners, and forbade him to quarrel any more.

"As you will, my lord," said Hall; "but mark my word, Lord Warwick made a great mistake bringing those fellows; not one of 'em's any use, they're nothing but the scum left over from the army which lost Normandy, and who knew there was a hanging for them at home if they ever set foot there again. Mark my words, you'll learn when it's too late. Veterans of the French wars indeed!" And he spat on the rushes that carpeted the floor.

At midnight York was awakened by a loud knocking on the door. There stood Sir David with a torch in his hand and as near a smile as his face was capable of.

"What bad news do you bring at this hour?" said York, who knew that smile of old.

"Oh, nothing much, my lord, only what I expected. Mundford, Trollope and Blunt have gone over to the enemy with all the Calais men; I told you they would."

"Then we must attack at once without them, before the panic spreads."

"Too late. Your Welsh levies have already scattered and the Marchers have sent to the Earl asking his leave for them to accept the King's terms."

At that moment Warwick and his father, with Edward, Rutland and Croft, came along the passage; Warwick cursing and swearing that he would hang every mother's son of his deserters whenever and wherever he could lay his hands on them. All his threats and entreaties had failed to stop a single man from deserting.

Hall had been right. They had fought and run away too often to risk their lives in a quarrel they had no part or parcel in, and one in which no plunder would be gained. They were not, like Salisbury's men, bound to their leaders by hereditary ties of loyalty, but just hired mercenaries of a very poor type. Mundford and the others were, after all, Henry's liege subjects, though they did take Warwick's money.

His anger bordered on tears, his pride was humbled in the dust. His boasted retainers had turned on him and made him ridiculous before those he loved best and whose high opinion he most desired. That they had endangered his life and fortunes counted little beside this. Such was the medley of thoughts that filled his mind as they all came into York's room, where they found Cecily dressed and ready.

"My lord, you must fly instantly," said Hall. "Your household are guarding the stables. The horses will be saddled by now."

"But how can the Duchess get away?" said York. "I can't leave her and the children."

"You can and must," said Cecily. "Your presence is only a danger to me. Without you no one will hurt me

or the children. Katherine and Buckingham will look after us. If you remain, it means a hopeless siege and all will be lost."

"She's right," said Salisbury. "We can do nothing. My men will fight if I tell them to, but I have no right to, as there is no chance of victory now."

"Richard, for all our sakes, I implore you to go," said Cecily.

Reason allowed of no other choice. The Duke had to agree.

"You're right, Cecily," he said. "I suppose I must. No one will hurt you or the babies, especially if I'm not here."

"I'll see to that," said Hall. "I'll hold the bridge and then fall back on the castle and make terms."

"You will do no such thing," said York. "By God! none shall ever say I left a man to defend my back while I ran away."

"No, my good Davy," said Cecily. "Go with your master; you've not the temper to negotiate. The least resistance would be fatal."

"We'd better divide forces," said York. "Salisbury, you and Edward go to Calais with Warwick, and Edmond come with me to Dublin; FitzGerald's a faithful friend. We can trust Cecily to Henry and Buckingham. I'll leave Father Aspoll here, the King knows him well."

"Away, Richard, away," said Cecily. "I'll follow you to Dublin as soon as I can."

"The horses are ready," said Hall.

Farewells were short. York, having told his men to make their peace with the King, rode swiftly west, the others south.

When dawn broke the Queen found no one to oppose her.

CHAPTER XXXI

KINGS AND PAWNS

CECILY was wrong as to the treatment she had expected to receive. Contrary to custom, when no resistance had been offered and the gates were thrown open, the Royal army plundered the town and castle of Ludlow. The Calais garrison had had no such chance for years, and took full advantage of it. They stripped the castle bare to the walls and abused and insulted the Duchess and her infant children. Somerset had no sufficiently disciplined body of troops under him to stop them even if he would, neither could he afford to offend them for he would need them to get possession of Calais.

It comforted Cecily to think that while the Calais garrison and the English soldiers—who had no intention of allowing the renegades of the night before to pinch all the plums they were plundering, they could not be pursuing her husband and brother.

Buckingham, the moment he heard what was going on, marched with any knights he could gather to Cecily's rescue, and handed her over to the care of his wife. She found her sister far less sympathetic and kind than her brother-in-law had been, for no sooner was Katherine alone with her prisoner than she proceeded to tell her just what she thought.

"A nice mess you made of things," she began.

"I?" said Cecily. "Rather you and that silly old husband of yours have made. Why couldn't he have behaved sensibly?"

"What do you mean by sensibly?" retorted Katherine. "Ruining his family and playing traitor?"

"If you mean by that putting your country's before your own interest, I do," said Cecily.

"Humphrey's never done that. He's always stuck to his King and stood for constitutional methods, not mob violence."

"And a long way it's got him. How long d'you suppose young Somerset will keep him as his minister?"

"Don't be absurd, Humphrey's not under Somerset. He's but the Queen's passing fancy."

"The result looks permanent enough. I never saw a healthier child."

"You've no reason to say that. How d'you know he's not Henry's son?"

Cecily's only reply was a laugh.

"Why must you always be stirring up strife?" Katherine continued.

"We don't. No one wants peace and good government as much as Richard does," said Cecily. "It's you and the Queen who are always setting on us and driving us to defend ourselves."

"You seem to forget that Humphrey has twice saved Richard's life, once by interceding with the King, once by warning him."

"Well, Richard spared his at St. Albans."

"Where your folly and insatiable ambition killed my son," said Katherine bitterly.

"What else could we have done?" answered Cecily, rather lamely. "The fight was forced on us."

"By your obstinacy," said the elder sister. "Don't tell me Richard would ever have left Ireland and his duty if you'd not egged him on. I don't blame him for my son's death, I blame you; you always were a silly self-

willed child. You've not only ruined your own family, but involved our unfortunate brother in the wreck. What might have been the greatest family combination, you've ruined."

"You should rather say that about yourself and that half-wit Westmoreland and his brother John. The rest of us are on the same side. Why should he pull the Percies into our quarrel?"

"Instead of abusing me, perhaps you'll tell me how you propose to get Tom and John out of the mess you've landed them in. The Queen swears she'll have their heads."

"I didn't land them in the mess. Their own folly did that. Surely Humphrey'll have no difficulty in getting Henry to pardon them? They're only boys and were attacked by Audley."

"If he isn't dismissed by young Somerset," said Katherine. "On the other hand, why should he exert himself? What have they or their father ever done for him but disturb the peace of the country? It's about time you learnt you can't go about the country killing people's sons and brothers and still expect them to serve your every whim. War and rebellions have been a very nice game for you, my dear. Your children were too young to play a part; now they aren't, and you'll feel very differently about it."

"Richard never shirks danger. Don't you think I care for him?"

"Husbands are old enough to look after themselves. It's waiting for news of your children that wrings your heart, as you'll find, my dear Cecily. Think what poor Alice¹ must be feeling now. I hope this will be a lesson to you, and, if the King is weak enough again to pardon

¹ Countess of Salisbury, mother of John and Thomas Neville.

your folly and let you go back to Ireland, you'll stop there and leave us to rule England peacefully and forget your silly ambitions. I hope you may never suffer as I have and will repent and see where your wickedness has landed you, and all those dear to you."

Thus "with many great rebukes" Katherine left her.

Cecily went with the court to Coventry, where a hurried Parliament was called to attain the rebels.

The Sheriffs were ordered under the Privy Seal to return suitable knights and burgesses; which they duly did, often without any form of election whatever. This so-called Parliament elected Thomas Tresham, son of the murdered Speaker, who had joined the King's party in hopes of revenging himself on Lord Grey de Ruthyn, who was now among the rebels.

Cecily was horrified when her sister showed her the Bill of Attainder. It read like a Roman Proscription. Her husband and herself, her two sons and brother, with his wife and their three sons, together with numerous cousins, were included. The Queen had taken the opportunity to insert the names of some of her private enemies, the King's half-brother, Jasper, Earl of Pembroke, whose lands she still claimed, although she had been compensated for the loss of them, and Somerset's rivals, Lord Stanley and his brother, William. They were all condemned to be hanged, drawn and quartered, outlawed, attainted for nine generations and deprived of all their property.

Cecily, George Nevile Bishop of Exeter, Thomas and John Nevile, the Stanleys, Ruthyn and Jasper Tudor, were in the King's hands. Katherine assured Cecily there was no chance of their proceeding to extremes against herself.

"But look at the indictment against Richard," she answered fiercely. "They accuse him of aiming at the

crown for the last ten years. May the Holy Mother of God be my witness, he could have had it any day by stretching out his hand for it. They accuse him of setting up Jack Cade. Did he not condemn the rebels and earn the hatred of the people of Kent? Has he ever taken up arms except in self-defence against that wicked evil Frenchwoman and her adulterers? If he had evil intent, would he have lain here like a stalled ox waiting for the butcher? It was all Henry Beaufort and his insane ambition for his bastard son or brother, whichever it is."

"Cecily, such words can do no good," said her sister. "Humphrey, Lord Bourchier, whose son is in the list, Waynflete, Norfolk and Shrewsbury are doing their best. If only the King has recovered enough to know what he's doing all will be well."

Unfortunately for the Queen and Somerset, Waynflete inserted in the Bill a clause reserving to the King the power to revoke the penalties and take into his favour again any of the attainted persons named. This power the King at once exercised to the full in respect of the Bishop of Exeter, Grey de Ruthyn, Jasper Tudor and the Stanleys, and he refused to allow any steps to be taken against Cecily and her brothers. The Stanleys undoubtedly had been hunting with the hounds and running with the hare, which they continued to do with great success for the next thirty years when William at last met his match in Henry Tudor. Lord Stanley's action, or rather inaction, during the battle of Bloore Heath certainly deserved a court martial.

This comic Parliament closed with a comic petition that the Sheriffs be absolved from the penalties for having illegally returned many members and the swearing of an unusual oath of allegiance as by "succession

born to reign" and to the Prince of Wales as "natural born" heir to the crown. Of the ninety peers that signed this, within one year all the bishops, an Archbishop and eight peers went back on it; fifty per cent of the minority had died.

Wiltshire and Scales were sent to hold special assize throughout the country. What they actually did was to sack York's properties and "maim, beat, slay all the tenants of the said Duke without pity."

Amongst other acts, the reason for which has never been discovered, they sacked and burnt Newbury before proceeding to Kent, where they sowed that winter the seed they reaped the following summer.

When the Court arrived in London, Cecily was lodged first in the house of Sir John Fastolf in Southwark, then in that of Sir John Paston in the Temple. The King had been very kind to her and left her under the care of the Duchess of Buckingham.

News reached the Temple easily, and before long Cecily was getting letters regularly from Dublin. From these she learnt that the people of Ireland had received York with acclamation. Their Parliament, it appeared, was sitting at the time of his arrival there and had legalised the position, as could only have been done in Ireland, where loyal subjects of Henry found it possible legally to support as the King's Lieutenant an attainted rebel with a price on his head.

They had got round the difficulty first by declaring the Irish Parliament independent of the English as Normandy's and Guienne's had been; therefore although the Duke of York and Earl of Rutland might be attainted rebels, the Earls of Ulster and Cork were not. They then enacted that no writs, issued for treason in England, ran in Ireland, and that any accused of this crime must be

tried before the Court of the Marshal and Constable of Ireland without appeal.

A further act laid down that any one who should attempt the life or dignity of the Lord Lieutenant would be guilty of High Treason.

After Ludlow, the Queen on the 9th of October had made Somerset Governor of Calais, and Wiltshire Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, but it is easier to plan the division of his skin than to take the lion.

Wiltshire sent Sir William Overy to Dublin with orders to arrest York. Overy, seeing the position of affairs, set out to obtain assistance from the Butlers and enemy Irish. He also sent letters under the Seal of Wiltshire, inviting the septs to attack the English Colonists.

These performances aroused the greatest indignation both in England and Ireland; none were more shocked than the chiefs of the septs, who had always found York a just and generous enemy. They suspected that they were being made a cat's-paw by an emissary of the Butlers, whom they had always hated. They sent Overy's letters to York, asked him what all the fuss was about, and received exactly the reply they understood. He arrested Overy and, under the new law, had him hanged, drawn and quartered, and his parts exposed over the gateways of the border towns of the Pale.

News to and from Calais also passed freely. Though Queen Margarine and the Duke of Somerset might be fighting the Duke of York and Earl of Salisbury, honest John Wainstead of Eastcheap and John Shore of Lombard Street must buy and sell wool and wine, and exchange the warring nobles' plate and jewels into armour and spears. Were trade with Calais stopped, how could the Staple, who was already owed £20,000, go on paying for

the garrison? Whether the Governor were Somerset or Warwick, the Staple would keep the gate of trade open.

When Cecily arrived in London about the middle of December, she heard all the Calais news from old John Shore, the court jeweller, having sent for him to raise money on some of her jewels, so as not to be entirely dependent on her brother-in-law's charity. She learnt that the members of the Calais garrison who had been left behind, had stood by Warwick and refused to open the gates to Somerset's envoys, also that the remaining garrisons consisted mostly of men sent out either by York, when he was Governor, or later by Warwick. Shore had been in Calais and brought back in pawn a lot of the Warwick jewels. He was thus able to pass on to her what information he had collected, besides recording some of his own experiences.

The fugitives had had an unadventurous ride to the coast. Warwick had proved himself as good in a small boat as he had in a big one. The three Earls had seized a fishing smack on the Devon coast, which Warwick sailed to Guernsey. There the Captain of the Island, Sir John Denham, had fitted them out a ship in which they reached Calais on November 2nd, just six hours before Somerset's heralds arrived to demand the surrender of the town to their Duke.

A week later, Somerset himself had set out with the men, who had deserted at Ludlow to take forcible possession of Calais. A portion of his fleet fetched up near Guisnes, where Sir Andrew Trollope went up to the fort and talked to the Porter, who was an old soldier like himself. The gate was opened and Somerset obtained a foothold in the Pale of Calais. The same good fortune failed to attend the rest of his fleet, which was blown into Calais harbour.

"We were all thrown into gaol," said Shore. "I had obtained a passage over from the Duke of Somerset."

"But I always thought you were on my husband's side, or I wouldn't have sent for you."

"Madam," replied the jeweller-banker, "my side is my trade. Your jewels and your nobles are as good and no better than the King's or his Grace of Somerset's. We naturally prefer his Grace of York, as he has more brains and a stronger hand than any one else, but we don't mix ourselves up with the quarrels of our betters if we can help it. All we want is a successful war with France and peace at home."

"I should have thought," said Cecily coldly, "if those were your views, you would have thought it worth while to make some sacrifice for them."

"Well, aren't I? Begging your Grace's pardon and meaning no disrespect, in no way whatsoever, but it ain't particularly healthy to do trade with them that's attainted—no, not by any means, and aren't I offering you as much, nay, more, on that ring than I would to the Queen's own Highness. That I am and St. Luke and St. Jude be my witness."

"Enough," said Cecily. "You were gaoled. Continue."

"Next morning, the Earl of Warwick has us all up. He goes down the line picking this one and that one out. When he comes to me, he says with a smile, 'Devil strike me! What in hell's name are you doing here, old money bags?' That's what he calls me, me and his lordship having done a little business before he came into his Earldom."

"'I thought your Lordship might want a little ready money,' I says."

"'Well, you come in queer company,' says he."

“‘ All’s good company which brings me into your Lordship’s presence,’ says I.

“‘ Stand back,’ says he, which I did.

“When he got to the end of the line, sending some forward and some back, he looks very stern, and says:

“‘ You are men who have taken my money, eaten my food, drunk my wine, and sworn to follow me to hell’s mouth and after; you came with me to England of your free will and pleasure, for I pressed no man of you, and then you betrayed me in the face of the enemy and held me up to shame and ridicule before my father and uncle, to whom I had foolishly boasted your fidelity and valour. Have you anything to say why you should not suffer death?’

“‘ We followed our old captains,’ said one.

“‘ We were Beaufort men,’ said another.

“‘ It was not a battle, but a shambles you were asking us to enter,’ said a third.

“‘ You all heard what I said that night,’ said the Earl, looking at them. ‘ You all volunteered to come. I would have led you into that shambles.’

“Then turning to Falconbridge, he says, ‘Take them out and behead every mother’s son.’

“All the others looks a bit white about the gills. When the front row had been marched out, he turns to us in the rear line, and says:

“‘ Have no fear, you’re not traitors to your salt. I give you the offer to serve me and your country here as part of the Calais garrison, or you can return by the first merchant ship to England with all your gear. I will neither force nor constrain any man to fight or follow me, but by St. Edward, I will deal with all false knaves as I have with those. Tell me in the morning which you will do.’

"There were a sound o' chopping wood outside and an occasional curse and cry.

"I can tell you, madam, it gave me a turn. Fancy if he'd a-told me to take a step forward instead o' back. I were glad that there weren't no money atween we, by Gom, I just were."

In his excitement the merchant had reverted to the yeoman stock from which he had sprung. Cecily could not help smiling as she said:

"You need have had no fear, Neviles repay their debt in kind."

"But, madam, they were all headed. I saw their corpses on the quay as I came out, so help me God, I did! A hundred and twenty of them, all bleeding and headless. If it was one of his Lordship's jokes, it weren't for them, anyway, and I wasn't with him above half an hour. A hundred and twenty living souls!" And as he wiped his forehead, the worthy alderman's fat paunch seemed to quake like a wobbly jelly.

"What else could they expect?" said Cecily. "I'm sorry for them, God rest their souls."

Shore wondered if her outlook would have been so calm if it had been her kith and kin, bleeding on Calais quay, but she must know that she herself and all her nearest and dearest were under sentence of death as traitors. Queer people, these nobles!

Cecily was rewarded in her patience in listening to the old man's loquacity, when she received from him a sum of money sufficient to allow her to purchase some much-needed arrows and bowstrings, which she sent out to her nephew in France. These supplies had been brought through the agency of a young lawyer living in the Temple, who had approached Cecily as she was walking in the Gardens and claimed kinship. His fair hair and blue

eyes proved him no liar. Unfortunately, this young lawyer, whose name was Roger Nevile, proved a sad bungler as a law breaker and with his eight fellow-conspirators was hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn, but without giving away their principal.

Somerset was hard pressed at Guisnes and kept importuning the Queen for help. She sent Lord Rivers and his son, Sir Antony Wodeville, to Sandwich with a body of about 500 men to reinforce her favourite.

Sandwich, still smarting from the indignity of the treatment it had received from de Brézé, had no love for the Queen's Government, and the day before the reinforcements were due to arrive the Mayor sent over warning to Calais.

Then Rivers' officers and men were well feasted by the Mayor and aldermen, who undertook to guard them while they slept.

Two large merchantmen tied up to the quay just as it was getting dark.

On being challenged by the sentry, one of the crew explained that it was too late to start discharging their cargo, and invited him and his fellows to come on board for a sup of French brandy. The winter night was dark and cold, and the sentry said he would come along about nine when all the officers would be asleep. Soon after the appointed time, they groped their way on board, but, unfortunately, the ladder into the hold slipped as they descended. Next morning they woke to find it full of Rivers' men.

Sir John Denham and Sir John Wenlock had come over in the merchantman and, once Rivers was settled in bed, had discharged their cargo of soldiers, and with the connivance of the town's people, had captured Rivers and all his men.

As soon as the news reached London, Lady Grey Rivers' eldest daughter, the wife of Sir John Grey of Groby, hurried round to the Temple. Every one knew that Warwick was on very bad terms with Rivers even before the last Coventry Parliament, and Lady Grey was terrified he would treat her father and brother as he had the faithless garrison.

Cecily had known her as the lovely Elizabeth Wodeville, maid in waiting to Queen Margarite, and received her kindly, assuring her that Warwick would harm neither her father nor her brother as their quarrel was open and public. She did not add that, for all his new barony, Warwick considered him beneath contempt, but readily agreed to write to her son and nephew and ask mercy, though she felt it quite unnecessary.

Lady Grey went away as comforted as if she had the order for their release in her pocket. Cecily thought her a weak, shallow woman, but was glad she had come, for the sense that she still counted in the world was a sop to her pride. The reply to her letter came from Edward, who told his mother they had laughed heartily over her letter and were surprised that any one could think the Wodevilles worthy of anything but a whipping and the stocks as Warwick had told them. The letter went on to say that they'd had great fun with them, that after dinner they had sat them on stools with their back to the walls, like old Croft had done to him and Edmond when he wished to punish them. Edward retold all the particularly stinging things he had said to Rivers; how had he, a lackey, dared to sit in judgment of such men as themselves; how could such dissolute and presumptuous a rascal, who would be holding some nobleman's stirrup had he not taken advantage of his master's widow, have the effrontery to call three earls and a royal Duke traitors?

He added that they had borne their upbraiding with as much silence and dignity as it was possible for such scullions to pretend to; his mother could tell the lovely Lady Grey, whom Edward had met at Leicester, that her father had suffered nothing but hard words, which he richly deserved, and a few crusts of bread flung at him to emphasise the points of their remarks.

Little did Edward think that the helpless captive, at whom he hurled crusts and abuse, was the father of his future wife, to please whom, his cousin and dearest friend Warwick would again be driven into exile and would, with his brother George, in that very room plot to remove from his head the crown with which he was so soon to encircle it.

CHAPTER XXXII

WHITE MOVES TO ATTACK

ALL through the winter into the spring Somerset kept his precarious hold on Guisnes. Towards the end of April Warwick sallied out, made an attack on the convoys at Newnham Bridge and inflicted a substantial defeat on him.

Somerset during all these months had been buying his provisions on a strictly cash basis from the Duke of Burgundy, regardless of the fact that England was at war with him. The Queen now suggested an alliance with Duke Philip to attack Calais, and that, should this prove successful, Calais should be left in the hands of the Burgundians. The matter was referred to Charles of Burgundy, Philip's son, who, taking the view that York had always been his friend, sent Warwick word of the offer.

Events had forced on Warwick the decision that the Yorkists must take ships to invade England and regain their rights and property. He was fast obtaining an ascendancy over his father and, in all bold projects, found an ally in Edward. Feeling now safe from Somerset and Burgundy, he took three ships, set sail for Ireland in May and made a record in arriving there in twelve days.

In Dublin, a manifesto was drawn up and York undertook to land in the north-west as soon as he could arrange a rising of his supporters.

Lady Salisbury, who had managed to escape to Dublin, was glad of the opportunity to travel with her son and join her husband at Calais. Winds again favoured them on their return journey. When off Plymouth, their

little fleet encountered the Royal Navy under Exeter. Warwick decided his one chance lay in a bold attack, so, running up his flag and cramming on all sail, he bore down on Exeter.

Captain Fulford, Exeter's second in command and a well-known Bristol pirate, led the van. Seeing the Warwick gold cross crosslets on their red field, he signalled to his chief that they had better put about, for if the sailors knew who was commanding the enemy, they would take their ships over to them. Exeter followed this advice and Warwick, perhaps influenced by the fact that his mother was on board, kept his course and proceeded unmolested on his way.

At Calais they found the Papal Legate, Cardinal Coppini. The Pope had sent him over to England to induce Henry to join in a crusade against the Turks, who had taken Constantinople six years before and were now threatening all Europe. Before England could join, it was necessary for her to have peace abroad as well as at home, and this Coppini had been sent to arrange. Entirely against his instruction, for Henry's piety naturally endeared him to the Pope, he threw in his weight with the Duke of York's party.

Soon after Warwick's return, Sir Humphrey Stafford,¹ whose father had been killed by Jack Cade, and young Lord Audley, who had also lost his at Bloore Heath, were sent with reinforcements for Somerset. While they awaited a favourable wind at Sandwich, Denham, Wenlock and Falconbridge, repeated their coup and carried them off to Calais in the same way as they had Rivers.

Mundford and three other officers of the Calais deserters who were among the captured, were brought before Warwick, who, after listening to what they had

¹ Became Earl of Devon.

to say, ordered them to be beheaded. The remainder of the prisoners were well treated.

Edward's charm of manner was such that all his noble prisoners at Calais including the Wodevilles went over to him and remained faithful to him to the end.

The Temple became the centre of the plot. Communication was very slow and the greatest precaution had to be exercised. The combined landing of York and Warwick was planned for the beginning of August, between hay and harvest, a time at which an army could easiest be got together, and yet not too late for movement, since, as a rule, the roads did not become impassable before the middle of November. Cecily was busy arranging for propaganda to be ready at the critical moment.

After the second descent on Sandwich (June 26th), Warwick's kinsman, Lord Falconbridge, had remained there. News of this raid spread quickly and so did a rumour that Wiltshire was again coming down with Scales to hold a summer Assize for the trial of more people implicated in the last year's rising. Archbishop Bourchier, disgusted at the way the country was being governed, went to Sandwich to consult Falconbridge. The people of Kent took this as a sign to rise.

A hasty council of war was called. Warwick was all for an immediate invasion, his father and uncle for sticking to the original plan, Salisbury pointing out that it would be impossible even to let York know in time for him to co-operate. Falconbridge said that if they went over now the whole affair would be settled one way or the other before York's supporters in the north-west could do anything about it. The Archbishop urged that the people of Kent had risen and would be crushed by Scales unless they were supported, also that the time was propitious, since the King was still at Kenilworth, and

there was only a small force of troops in London, which could easily be taken by surprise. Edward naturally sided with Warwick, and they finally persuaded the others. It was decided that the three Earls should land at Sandwich on the 26th July and march via Canterbury on London.

The usual manifesto set out their loyalty to the King and their desire to remove evil councillors, particularly Somerset, Wiltshire, Shrewsbury and Beaumont. It reiterated most of the complaints of Jack Cade, as to the breakdown of all civil government, alienation of Crown Lands, heavy taxation, loss of France, etc. To these were added two very serious charges, the attempts to raise the Irish natives against the colonists and Somerset's offer of Calais to Burgundy, the last of which would be certain to arouse the people of Kent, since Calais meant the livelihood of the majority of them. The Queen's party for the first time was openly accused of having murdered Duke Humphrey. It was published broadcast and at the same time the country was flooded with leaflets and political poems, attacking the legitimacy of the Prince of Wales, and employing very scurrilous language about the Queen. In London on a given night this libel was nailed on every church door.

Warwick's rashness was justified by its success. Except the Nevile clan, Clinton, Say and Audley were the only peers with him on his march, but the people led by the Bishops of Salisbury and Exeter,¹ threw open the gates of London and welcomed the rebels with the greatest enthusiasm.

Those members of the Government, who were in London, shut themselves up in the Tower of which Lord Scales was Constable.

¹ Richard Beauchamp and George Nevile.

The first thing Edward did was to go to the Temple, where his mother was naturally delighted to see him. He wanted her to move to better quarters, but there were none, for Baynard's Castle had been pillaged, like all their other properties, and the Bishops' palaces were occupied. Convocation was in session, an opportunity Warwick seized to swear allegiance to Henry before them in St. Paul's.

Cecily and Salisbury were all for waiting till York could arrive, but the young Earls would not hear of it. Edward pointed out that if they were to remain passive the Queen would have time to raise her friends in the north and north-west, and that Exeter could move the fleet, blockade Dublin, and prevent his father landing.

With half the Queen's party shut up in the Tower, and the other half scattered, to defeat the royal army at Coventry should be easy. They decided at last that Salisbury should remain in London and mask the Tower, while Edward and Warwick should lead the army against the King.

The unfortunate Queen, deprived of her old advisers, did not know what to do. Somerset was in France, Wiltshire, at the first sign of danger, had fled to sanctuary at Ottery St. Mary's, Scales, de Moleyns, now Lord Hungerford, de la Warr and de Vesey were in the Tower, and her northern friends were trying to raise troops in their own districts. First she had been all for a hurried march in London, then she wished to retire to Lancaster or York. She consulted such of her cabinet as remained and a definite plan was decided on; next day, without a word to them, she cancelled everything and issued fresh orders.

Waynflete, the Chancellor, and Booth, the Privy Seal, resigned and the officers of the household followed suit.

At this moment, the Duke of Buckingham and Lord

Shrewsbury arrived, and Buckingham decided that the only course was to march on London, defeat the Earls and then turn on the Duke.

On reaching Northampton on the 9th, they heard that Warwick and Edward were at Stony Stratford. The King sent the Queen and the Prince off to Eccleshall, thinking she would be safe under the care of Lord Stanley's people, but as usual he was wrong for, on hearing the result of the battle, the Stanley servants made off with all her jewels and money and left her stranded.

Henry was joined at Northampton by Beaumont and Grey de Ruthyn, who had quite made his peace with the Queen after Ludlow and was now in high favour with her. During the night he sent word to Warwick and Edward, that if, when they came into power, they would grant him the lands of Wrest in Bedfordshire, to which he had no shadow of claim, he would assist them to enter the King's trenched camp situated on the banks of the Nene between de la Pré Abbey and the town. The bargain was soon struck.

Even now with all the cards in their hands, the Earls still played for peace, and sent Coppini and Richard Beauchamp, Bishop of Salisbury, to treat for it. Beauchamp took such a dictatorial line, that Buckingham told him he should speak like that after and not before a battle, that while he had arms in his hands he would not listen to such proposals.

Knowing Warwick's rash nature, Buckingham awaited his attack in a loop of the muddy Nene in which he had placed sharpened stakes. Both his flanks were thus covered, and the front of the loop was entrenched from water to water.

Warwick on the left, halted his men while, on the right, Edward advanced to where de Ruthyn was posted.

Buckingham, to his horror, saw the rebels being helped up the trenches by Ruthyn's men. Calling to Shrewsbury, Egremont and Beaumont, he hastened to the tent where the King calmly knelt in prayer, awaiting the result of the battle.

Edward, having crossed the trenches, made straight to the same spot. The royal army, seeing its front pierced, turned and melted away. For fifteen minutes the battle raged round the tent till the four loyal lords and their squires all lay stretched on the ground.

Warwick and Edward, their naked swords dripping with blood, burst into it. Thrusting aside the trembling priests and pages, they entered the King's presence. He rose from his knees and calmly faced them.

"Forsooth, my lord of Warwick, and you, my young cousin, you do ill thus to enter our presence. Put up your swords."

The two young men, hot from the slaughter of battle, halted dumb before this fragile and defenceless man. They sheathed their swords and instinctively dropped on their knees.

"Again, my Lord Warwick, I command you to stop this effusion of Christian blood," said the King. "Why will you always be disturbing our kingdom and slaying our servants?"

"Your Highness," stammered Warwick, "it has ceased. It is not we who disturb the country, but the evil counsellors who surround you and keep your loyal subjects from you."

"We are only here to bring peace and tranquillity to this land," said Edward.

"You adopt strange methods," said the King; "but go and see that there is no more bloodshed. I wish to pray for the souls of those you have slain."

Warwick and Edward found themselves backing out of the tent.

Outside they stopped and looked at each other. Edward started to laugh.

"Who's won this battle?" he asked. "Henry or us?"

Grey de Ruthyn was not the only one who sought personal gain from the distress of his country. Sir John Stafford happened to be in love with Lady Lucy of Charlecote. Sir William Lucy, arriving late for the battle met Sir John, who, without inquiring on which side his rival had intended to have fought, ran his sword through him.

After three days' rest at Northampton, Warwick and Edward returned with the King to London, where Warwick was tacitly allowed by his father to take command till York arrived.

The King was very docile, and complied with their requests. He ordered Scales to give up the Tower. None of the peers or knights there was detained, except seven of the Calais deserters against whom Warwick made good his threat by having them tried before him at the Guild Hall and executed.

Such was the hatred for Scales, that, to effect his escape, the disguise of a monk was thought necessary. As he rowed across the river, however, some watermen recognised him, and promptly murdered him, leaving his naked body on the mud.

This infuriated Warwick, who issued a proclamation against all rioters, and gave the unfortunate peer honourable burial.

A new Parliament was at once called to meet on the 7th October and a Government formed. All the peers received their writs except Rivers, still a prisoner at Calais, and Wiltshire who was in sanctuary.

Warwick returned to Calais and arranged with Somerset that he should give up Guisnes for the sum of £1032 due to the garrison.

Things were far from settled in England. Once too often James II. of Scotland took this opportunity to attack, and blew himself up with one of his own guns while besieging Roxborough Castle. The Percies and the Raby Neviles were raising an army to attack Lord Salisbury.

Northampton had been fought and won before York knew his friends had left Calais. He did not hurry his return, wisely judging it best to keep out of the way till Parliament met. Neither he nor any one else doubted the result of their deliberations, unwelcome as it would be to him, for he stood out as the only man fit to rule the country; the only question in the balance was as to what form that rule should take.

During this crisis Edward, when in London, had found time to visit his mother daily. Even he was getting a little tired of relating his deeds of valour at the battle of Northampton, for little Richard insisted on hearing all about them every time they met.

From Ireland York first went to his Welsh border estates, toured about them, reinstating his tenants and compensating them for the losses they had sustained on his behalf. He was acclaimed everywhere as the saviour of his country.

Since the retirement of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, fifteen years before, law and order in England had been a dead letter. The strong preyed on the weak and every man was a law unto himself.

The only break in the clouds had been York's two brief protectorates, but they had not lasted long enough to effect any permanent improvement.

Cecily met her husband at Hereford. He had with him only a party of 500 horse, being determined that whatever was done should be done constitutionally.

For a whole week she argued with him, insisting he should take the crown, that he must be King "de jure" as well as "de facto," and that while Henry was King, if only in name, the Queen could always use him as a means of stirring up trouble. She tried to impress on him the futility of Parliament appointing him Protector, for the King in his semi-sane moments could dismiss him, which now would mean death.

She soon won over her son Rutland and he again and again urged on his father the fact of his undoubted hereditary right, that Henry V. only held the throne by Parliamentary title, and that one Parliament could not bind another. Two left-handed Mortimer uncles joined in these persuasions, saying that their father had never renounced his right, though he had not brought it forward.

Resistance to York grew weaker as he neared London; the whole nation seemed to want him as King. Still, he would not even agree to lay his claim before Parliament if the force of arms or the use of trickery were needed to enforce it.

"I have only taken up arms," he said, "to protect my life and ensure good government. I will never have a drop of blood spilt for my own aggrandisement."

"But if you put forth your claim," said Cecily, "you must at least make men see you believe in it."

"Certainly," agreed York, "I shall employ the best lawyers to set it out."

"Lawyers!" said Cecily. "The people don't believe in lawyers, and it's the people which count."

"But I can't see, how any of us, especially the bishops,

can get over the oath of allegiance we have so often sworn," argued York.

"The Cardinal Legate and the Archbishop will manage that all right," said Sir John Mortimer.

"The King will abdicate in your favour. You know how he hates war, and by now he must see that he's quite unfit to rule," said Rutland.

"Has he not told you, countless times, how tired he is of the whole thing," said Cecily, "and how he'd like to give up the crown if only he could, and go into a monastery?"

"If only he could," repeated York. "That's the rub. He's a queer mixture is Henry. I'm not at all sure he would give up the crown even if Parliament asked him to."

"Oh," said Cecily. "He's no will of his own. He'll give it up with pleasure the moment he sees all the peers wish him to."

"Don't be too sure," said York. "And the peers have not yet asked him."

"Warwick will see they do that," said Rutland, with all the confidence of youth in its hero.

"Then you will put forward your claim?" said Cecily.

"As you're so insistent, my love," replied York, smiling.

"All you have to do is to enter the House and lay your hand on the throne and all the lords and commons will shout, 'King Richard.' " said Rutland.

"I'll try, but rather doubt its being as easy as that," said York.

"The bold course is always the best," said Cecily. "I hate the crooked ways of lawyers. Say it with swords and banners, not musty parchments."

When the Duke left his lodging at Uxbridge the day he intended to enter London, he was met with a more

than usually loud welcome. Mingled with the cheers were cries of "King Richard." The newness of his banner, borne by his nephew, Sir Edward Bouchier, attracted his attention. It bore no label of difference.

It was the banner of the King of England.

Standing by his horse's head was Sir David Hall, the naked sword of state in his hand. borne only before the Kings of England. Sir John Mortimer, bare-headed, held his stirrup.

"This is your doing, you witch," said York, turning to Cecily. "You've trapped me. It's too late to turn back. The die is cast. May we never regret it."

The trumpets sounded the royal salute for King Richard and Queen Cecily for the first and last time.

Richard entered the great hall of Westminster as the peers were receiving the Commons and their newly elected Speaker, Parliament having been opened by the King two days before.

The manner of York's coming had already reached them and every one was anxious to see how he would act. Would he take forcible possession of the throne? There was no one to prevent him. The army, the Commons and the always formidable London mob were all his. Outside the hall were 500 knights and men-at-arms in plate armour, heroes of a hundred border fights, ready to carry out any order he might give.

As York walked up the great hall, all eyes watched. He passed his proper seat and mounted the steps of the throne. Laying his hand on it, he turned to face the assembly. There was dead silence.

The Archbishop of Canterbury rose in his place and inquired if the Duke had yet waited on his King.

York was rather taken aback. He had not expected this question. He replied:

"I know of no person in this realm, which oweth not to wait on me rather than I on him."

Having thus made his claim, he retired from the house and took possession of the King's apartment,¹ as the King himself was occupying those usually used by the Queen.

Another surprise awaited him. Warwick had not been present in the Lords that afternoon, having been drawn to Greenwich to see about some ships. When he heard of what had happened he went to his uncle and made a strong protest, declaring that he had seen much of the King lately, and was certain it was unnecessary to dethrone him. Besides, they were bound by their oath and the proclamation of Canterbury. Edward too, was not enthusiastic about this claim to the throne, for both young men had come under the spell of the innate holiness of Henry.

Cecily was furious with them and the Lords.

York stuck to his guns, said it was no good quarrelling, the matter was in the hands of the Lords, and he would abide loyally by their decision.

Next day the King was asked by the Archbishop to abdicate the crown, which was too heavy for him.

"I was born a King," Henry replied. "I do not wish or enjoy Kingship, but what God imposes on man, that he may not put away from him."

The Lords found themselves in a difficulty. York's hereditary claim was indisputable; could it be barred by acts of Parliament and oath of allegiance? They asked the judges, who said it was "too high a matter for them." They consulted the law officers, who replied that what was too high for the judges was far too high for them.

¹ There is no contemporary evidence to support the Tudor story that he used force. The same applies to the story that Warwick insulted the King when brought a prisoner to London in 1463.

A deputation of Lords then went and implored the King to abdicate, pointing out the great danger of refusing when absolutely in York's power.

"If he would be so impious as to slay the Lord's Anointed, God's will be done, but I cannot give up what God has given me."

The matter was again debated and a third time the King was asked to abdicate, but again he made the same reply.

York would not allow any more pressure to be put on him, and it was agreed that Henry should retain the title of King, but that York should be Protector for life and heir to the throne, receiving the revenues of Wales, Cornwall and Chester which had belonged to the Prince of Wales, whose existence was thus tacitly ignored.

Ironically enough, this last act was made easy under the very law which Margarite had had passed to deprive York of his lands; for since she and the Prince of Wales had been sent summonses to appear instantly before the King and had failed to obey within thirty days, they suffered complete forfeiture of their property.

York still insisted that this accord must be accepted by the King of his free will. The Archbishop, therefore, with the Lords, waited on him and were sent back with a message, that "after good and sad deliberation and advice had with all his Lords, he, inspired with the Grace of the Holy Ghost and eschewing the effusion of Christian blood, condescended to an accord to be ratified by Parliament."

Next day York, Edward and Edmond went with the King to St. Paul's and swore to preserve the King's dignity and pay him due homage and reverence.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE WHITE KNIGHT

MARGARITE had not accepted defeat tamely. Robbed and deserted by Eccleshall, she went to York, where she was met by the Earls of Northumberland, Devon, Pembroke, Wiltshire and Westmoreland's brother, Sir John Nevile.¹ The Duke of Somerset, Lords Clifford, Roos and Dacre of the north joined her later.

Jasper of Pembroke and his father, Owen Tudor, were sent into Wales to raise troops.

December was wet and cold, but this did not prevent York from going north to bring the Queen to obedience, in which task he did not anticipate much difficulty. He now had the authority of the King and Parliament behind him, so this time it was the Queen and her friends who were the rebels. He did not take a large force with him, relying on men he had sent Edward to collect in the Marches of Wales making enough with those from his own and Salisbury's northern estates. Warwick was left in charge of the Government in London.

When the Tower had surrendered after the battle of Northampton, Edward had found the Queen's armourer engaged in making a little suit of mail for the Prince of Wales. This he commandeered and gave, with sword and spurs complete, to his brother Richard, who was wild with delight.

The shrubs and rose trees in the Temple garden

¹ He acted for Westmoreland as head of the family and is often termed Lord Nevile.

suffered sadly from his warlike exercises, but every one was too busy to pay much attention to the young warrior. Father Aspell, the chaplain, did his best, though he had neither the authority nor the heavy hand of Sir Richard Croft, who was busy polishing up Edmond and the other young men for war.

Cecily was naturally anxious about the excursion to the north, but, after all the dangers York had come through safely, she could not really worry too much about the rounding up of a woman and a handful of rebel lords. There was no information as to who exactly were with the Queen, nor what number of soldiers she had with her, but no serious resistance was expected. York had so often overcome difficulties without fighting, that the likelihood was he would do the same on this occasion.

Cecily and her young children, with the exception of Richard, who could not be found, came to the Tower to bid York and Edmond Godspeed. She was rather worried about Richard, for London was a dangerous place for an eight-year-old to be lost in. York was also disappointed, for he loved his baby and felt his absence, though he was sure he had come to no harm as his pony and groom were also missing.

"That young man must be put under Croft, when I get back," he said. "You spoil him, Cecily. A little hard discipline is what he wants. Mind you're not weak with him, when he turns up."

"I don't think I'm the only one who spoils the children; you'd have got rid of Croft, if it had not been for me."

"Well, I must be off," he replied, bending down from his high horse and kissing her. "God bless and keep you, my love, now and always. I'll be back before Christmas."

God bless you, my children, be good and don't worry your mother, while I'm away."

Waving his hand, he joined his troops and led them through the archway into the bailiwick. As Cecily looked after him, she saw a small figure on a pony. Forgetting her dignity for once, she picked up her petticoats and ran, arriving just in time to see her baby armed cap-à-pie, on his wee pony, dutifully saluting his father. Behind him was his groom and his particular friend, Francis Lovell, a page about his own age. Dwarfing the group, on his huge bay stallion, holding a banner on which was a white boar, sat of all people, Sir David Hall!

"What are you doing here, sir?" said York, very sternly.

"I'm coming to the war with you," said Richard, squarely meeting his father's frown.

"Oh, are you?" said Richard.

"Yes," said Richard. "All true and pledged men must, Sir Davy says, and he's got my banner, and Francis is my squire."

"Come here at once and be spanked," said Cecily. "You naughty, disobedient child. Really, Sir David, I'm surprised at you countenancing such naughtiness. You're old enough to know better. Come here at once, Richard."

"He promised," said Richard, "so had to. Please, don't spank him."

Cecily was very angry. She was quite aware that running at her time of life in her best court clothes was undignified and made her look absurd.

"Come here at once," she repeated.

"Won't," said Richard, who could generally rely on his father's support. "I'm going to the war with father."

"You're going to do no such thing," said Cecily. "You're coming home to be whipped and sent to bed."

Richard's face went white and puckered.

"Father, I may come," he pleaded, "and be whipped when we come back."

York smiled. That was the spirit.

"You shall come and be my messenger," he said.

"Richard," said Cecily, "you cannot and shall not take that baby with you. I won't allow it."

"I was younger than he, when I rode from Cambridge to Raby," he replied.

"And a nice state you were in when you arrived, from all accounts," Cecily said, her mind flying back to the big nursery at Raby.

"I'll send him back at Hampstead," York whispered; "but no whipping, please, or he comes with me."

"And who spoils the children?" said Cecily, with a smile.

So the Duke of York and his two sons rode out to meet Queen Margarite.

"How came you to be mixed up in this affair, Davy?" asked the Duke. "And so nearly getting a whipping?"

"Well, my lord, it's a long story. As I was going through the Temple gardens, I heard a fearful commotion. I thought half London was being murdered. Down one of the narrow alleys Lord Richard and a gang of ragamuffins had driven a great hog, which had strayed into the gardens, and he was slashing at it with his sword, more to the animal's rage than hurt."

"It was a horridsome monster from the forest, and they weren't ragamuffins, but my 'ticular company of Free Foresters, but their mothers would not let them come."

"Silence, sir," said York. "How dare you interrupt your betters."

"He's my standard bearer," said Richard. "He

promised, so had to come. You won't whip him, will you? He couldn't help it."

"Continue to show cause, Sir David," said York, in his sternest manner, "why you should not be whipped."

"Lord Richard's right. I promised," said Hall solemnly. He luckily was physically incapable of smiling, except in case of dire disaster. "As I rounded the corner, the brute turned and charged, knocking the child over and savaging him. 'Give him the point!' I shouted. 'Give him the point.' And by St. Anthony, he did. When I got up the beast was dead on the top of him. It had run the sword clean through its heart. Luckily as he had raised the point, the hilt must have been against a stone. I asked his lordship how he was. He said, he would first be whipped by Father Aspell for playing truant, then by his nurse for being in such a mess and, he thought, by her Grace over the horridsome monster, and might even lose his arms and spurs. That seemed too high a price for a London hog, so I invited him to come to my lodging and furbish up a bit.

"There, a young painter-stainer called Nicholson was repainting my arms. When he heard about the hog, he said he must make a banner for Lord Richard like the King Arthur's knights, with a horridsome white boar on it.

"Well, the washing and drying of his lordship's clothes took a long time and a cup or two of sack; those painter fellows are sad tipplers."

"Dickon," said York, "you shouldn't lead your squires and standard bearers into drinking habits. It's very wrong."

"Yes, father," said Dickon, not the least understanding.

"Well, when his lordship was ready to return home, so was the banner, and some one had to carry it home,"

said Hall, rather shamefacedly. "And on the way he asked me if I would be his standard bearer when he went to the war, so I said if I was still alive I would be proud to follow him.

"This morning early his lordship turns up with the banner and tells me that you say a true knight never goes back on his word even if it means a basting from her Grace, so as the Free Foresters had deserted in a body at the bottom of Ludgate Hill, I had to come along with my lord's banner."

"I'll hang every mother's son, like Cousin Warwick, when I get back," Richard said.

"Good idea," said York, who had been wondering how to get rid of the child. "I wouldn't be too hard on them, they're very young."

"But they promised," said Richard. "Francis came and they are all older than him."

"But they are not of noble birth," said York; "that makes all the difference. Now go and do justice on the scurvy knaves, but don't hang them. We can leave no rebels at our back."

"But I want to come with you," said Richard.

"A soldier obeys," said York and held out his hand.

Two big tears splashed on the shining breastplate, as the knight of the White Boar saluted and, without a word, turned his horse back to London.

"He'll make a great man some day," said York.

"Like his father," muttered Hall.

"I wish Warwick had been less severe on those Calais deserters," said York. "To punish the officers would have been quite enough."

CHAPTER XXXV

MATE

DAYS passed. Cecily and the council carried on the Government, confident that they would soon hear that the rising in the north had been suppressed.

On a cold January evening a priest came to the Temple. His face was worn with sorrow and he could hardly sit on his horse.

There had been rumour in the air all day. No one knew where it came from, but there it was drifting hither and thither like the snowflakes borne on the biting north wind.

The priest was shown into Cecily's presence. When she saw who the messenger was she felt her heart stop, but sat very upright in her chair, holding hard on to the arms.

"I see you bring ill news, Father Aspull," she said, "or you would not be here. Bring him food and wine. Tell me the worst quickly."

"I cannot, I cannot," he stammered, tears pouring down his cheeks.

"The Duke is dead?" Cecily said, in a cold, hard voice. The priest bowed his head and crossed himself.

"Edmond?"

"Murdered in cold blood by Lord Clifford."

"My brother?"

"Beheaded at Pontefract by the Queen," sobbed the priest. "Sir Thomas Neville and Sir Edward Bouchier died on the field."

"Take some wine," said a strange voice. "Calm yourself, I wish to hear exactly how this happened."

Cecily realised the voice was hers.

After a minute or two during which she sat numb and staring, the priest resumed.

"When we got to Sandal Castle, we found his Grace had been badly served. All the north were with the Queen, her forces outnumbered ours four to one. The snow had prevented Lord Edward or his Grace's tenants joining up."

"But surely Sandal could not be stormed," said the voice.

"No, madam, but after Christmas the Queen came and taunted his Grace about hiding behind walls, afraid of a woman. The Earl, your brother, tried to stop him and so did good Sir Davy." And the priest crossed himself. "But you know what his Grace is like when he smells a battle. He turned on him, and said:

"Davy, Davy, hast thou loved me so long and would now have me dishonoured? You never saw me keep in a fortress when I was Regent in Normandy, when the Dauphin himself and all his power came to besiege me, but like a man, not a bird in a cage, I went out and fought him to his loss, and I thank God, to my honour. If I have not kept myself within walls for fear of a great and powerful prince, nor hid my face from any man living, would you that I should for dread of a scolding woman?"

"Lord Salisbury urged their numbers, but his Grace wouldn't listen. He maintained that half the Queen's men were his friends and would either join him or fly.

"He swore before God he'd issue alone and fight them single-handed if no one would follow him.

"It was a trap, your Grace, a cunningly baited trap." And the priest broke into loud sobs.

"Calm yourself," said the same dead voice.

"The Queen had sent off a large portion of her forces to intercept Lord Edward, so we were told, but they hid in the woods and, as his Grace sallied out of the Castle, they closed in our rear. Sir David carried the Duke's banner and Lord Edmond rode on his left hand. We had no chance. His Grace performed prodigies of valour, but his horse fell and he rose no more. Sir David died astride his body. Lord Salisbury and Lord Edmond were surrounded and taken by Lord Clifford's men.

"When the butcher Clifford came up, he drew his dagger and exclaimed:

"'Your father slew mine, by God, I'll slay you and all your kind.' I threw myself on my knees and implored him to take pity on so noble a youth. He threw me aside."

The priest covered his eyes with his hand.

"He then bade me come and tell you, madam, that he would so serve all your sons."

Warwick and Norfolk had entered the room, during the priest's recital.

"I see you have heard the news," said Warwick, in a hard voice.

"Yes," said Cecily dully. "Where have they buried my dear ones? That I may go there and pray for their souls."

"You haven't heard then, that this hell-fiend has insulted our dead, as well as murdering the living?" replied Warwick. "She has hacked off their heads and, with paper crowns on them, set them up on York Gate with bare poles between them for Edward's and mine. By St. George, unless I replace them in six months with her friends' heads, may mine be beside theirs. I swear, before God and all his angels, that I will replace them

too, without dishonouring the bodies of those who fall in battle."

"Oh, accursed is the Beaufort blood," said Cecily, rising to her feet. "Beware of it, Richard, for cursed it is from its bastard source. Cursed be my grandfather for ever begetting us in adultery. This vain consuming ambition, which cannot rest, is the ruin to us all, driving every one of us always on, withering all our lives and destroying all we love most dearly. The world is not big enough for our vaulting ambition. When we have slain our enemies, we, like the Cæsars of Rome, turn and rend each other. Oh, for ever accursed the day I was born, for it is I who drove on my Richard to this bloody death. I have slain my son and my dearest brother. Why could I not let them be content and live in humble peace?"

"Lead me away to some quiet cell where I may end my days in prayer and repentance."

Turning, she walked slowly to the door leading to her private chapel.

From that hour she took on the habit of a nun, only emerging at rare intervals from her retreat at Berkhamsted in vain endeavour to avert the fate she foresaw for all her race.

So passed from the world Cecily Nevile, Duchess of York and Clarence, Countess of Mortimer, Cambridge, Rutland, Ulster, Cork and Meath, the Rose of Raby, Queen of England in all but name.

THE END

